MEMORIALS OF JOHN GEDDES

1797 - 1881

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John Tibbles. 1864.

Memorials of John Geddes

being

Record of Life in an Upland Glen

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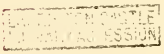

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Chapter I.

EARLY DAYS—THE ENVIRONMENT.

IF you look in the map of Aberdeenshire, where the Deveron leaves Highlands for Lowlands, you will find in the remote corner of that County the Parish of Glass, still bearing its Gaelic name, significant of the "grey" grassy pasture which had formed its marked feature in the early times. It is within the little orbit of this parish that the Life which forms the subject of this narrative mainly moved; and without being romantically beautiful, it was a parish distinctly picturesque in its configuration, and capable by its features of inspiring and magnetising the youthful mind. For it lies at that point of the landscape which Sir Walter Scott pronounces to be necessarily the most picturesque in our Scottish scenery, at the junction, namely, of the

rougher uplands with the softer plains, where the mountains guarding the infant stream have sunk down to hills less stern and commanding, allowing a fringe of birches and hazels to soften their shaggy sides, while every now and then numerous affluents called "burns" come gurgling in through the hollows that stretch away into the recesses of the diverging glens.

In the north side of this parish, near the dividing line separating the Counties of Aberdeen and Banff, rises the hill of Talnamonth, otherwise Altnamonth, a good mile and a half from the stream of the Deveron, and commanding an extensive coast view, with a possible glimpse in a clear day of the Moray Firth. It was on the southern slope of this hill that there lay a bank of land, a sort of island among muirs and mosses, called Bodylair, consisting of two farms, West and East Bodylair, each with its little cluster of farm-houses, the two holdings being separated mainly by the county road leading from Deveronside to Fiddich vale over the grim and forbidding pass known as Corsmaul.* The land on these farms, and especially on East Bodylair, was in general poor, ill-drained, and unproductive, lying as it did close to the upper limit of

* Corsmaul in Gaelic is believed to mean the "meall" or lumpish hill, with a "cross" upon it, the cross having been in old time a landmark for guidance of travellers.

cultivation, so that, with winter lingering long and frosts coming early, life was a serious struggle, and a certainty of oat crops yielding, as the phrase ran, "seed and bread," could not be reckoned on. It was at the second of these farms, or East Bodylair, that the subject of this memoir, John Geddes, saw the light, and spent the first part of his life, even all his early days. Of the two holdings, East Bodylair was far the most exposed and shelterless, and at the period of our story could not boast of a single tree except one stunted ash which had managed to maintain a ragged existence,—a stricken shrub rather than a tree.*

The farm was probably an ancient holding, and we find a James Geddes in "Bodilair" in 1716 (Misc. Sp. Cl., IV., p. 168), about the Sheriffmuir time. The houses, such as my earliest recollection figures them, were fairly substantial, round a courtyard flanked by the long rambling house, with its windows looking out to the enclosure called the "gairden." These buildings had been gradually erected and "heathered" by my father, who was always great in masonry, and the whole style of them was conceived in a

* At the foot of this poor tree was found about the beginning of this century, by some strange chance, an Austrian Dollar of Leopold I., a large and handsome silver piece still in the family. My father used to think of it as possibly dropt by some Dugald Dalgetty returning from foreign wars and halting to rest on the spot. The finder of it was my father's only brother James, who was thought therefore a favourite of fortune, but he died young.

form rather above than below his means, and perhaps above the real requirements of the farm, originally little more than a single horse-pair farm. The outlook from the little windows, over the blackberry bushes in the garden, toward the West, was interesting, though not inviting. It was, in brief, a panorama of brown heathery hills, with scattered green patches, denoting where springs were more abundant, and with serrated ridges in the far distance, breaking into occasional crags, among which soared conspicuous the curious cocks comb, with its triple notch, of Craigdornie, confronted upon the other side of the strath by the towering and inhospitable Craigs of the Succoch,* both localities

* These Craigs, projected on the sky line, resembled the teeth of some capsized antediluvian animal gnashing against the sky, and formed to the Strath the visible symbol of steadfast immobility. The story goes that the Minister had on one occasion been led to expatiate on the heavenly bodies and the motion of the earth round the sun, whereupon on the way home a farmer of the district, innocent of the Newtonian astronomy, denounced the doctrine as a rousing whid—"Na! Na! I'll nae believe the like o' yon, fae the minister himsel', sae lang as my houss stan's in sicht o' the Craigs o' the Succoth." It was perhaps this farmer who, in the Kirk of Glass, blurted out to himself the audible remonstrance with the minister who had given out a text, that baffled the farmer to find, in one of the minor prophets—"Haggai, Haggai, fat the sorra gars him gang hol-lin for a text in Haggai!" Not less primitive were the notions prevalent in the glen as to chronology. A favourite story of my father's related to an old *black letter* Bible, known to have been a marvel in Tam Lobban's Cottage by the waterside. One day two of the parishioners were talking of the great age of the book, and one of them ventured to say, "Ow, man, it's nae surely sae auld as our Sauviour." "Bless ye, man," was the unabashed reply, "it existit lang afore there was ony word o' a Sauviour."

being in early time famous haunts of the smuggler. Beyond these last rose the gloomy ridge of Groamach, where snow always first appeared, gloomy, as its Gaelic name signifies, and gloomy by nature, adjoining the sub-alpine parish of Cabrach,* the cradle of the young Deveron. This panorama of billowy hills, viewed from Bodylair, might well recall the Border minstrel's words:

> And westward hills on hills you see,
> Even as wild Ocean's mightiest sea
> Heaves high her waves of foam;
> Dark and snowridged from Cutsfeld's wold
> To the proud foot of Cheviot roll'd,
> Earth's mountain billows come.

Substitute, for Cutsfeld, Corsmaul, and for Cheviot, Groamach, and the transferred picture will suit the scene in the uplands of Deveronside.

Toward the south-east, where the river could be seen

* Cabrach, or as it is in the vernacular, *the* Cabrach, as if a province like *the* Mearns or *the* Boyne, is a Highland parish, though now with no Gaelic spoken within its borders, yet notable for its hardihood, its music, and its hospitality. Some fine airs of Scottish song have come out of it, or at least are inseparably connected with it, notably "Roy's Wife of Aldivalloch"; its firesides glow with hospitality, but the scenery as well as the climate is grim and far from inviting, even in a summer's day. A shuddering traveller, hailing from the South, who passed through the Heigh Cabrach, was asked to describe it. "Describe the Cabrach," was the reply, "Na, sirs, I canna liken it to onything but the ill place, *wi' the fire oot*." The Spartan fare, however, and bracing air evolve a sturdy race of honest folks in the Cabrach people.

winding among haughs and birken shaws, the prospect was less repellent, and the smoke of the village of Huntly, the capital, so to speak, of the district, could be discerned in the distance, with gleams in fine weather of the sunshine falling on the Castle walls, marking the ruined seat of the great house of Gordon in Strathbogie. Such was the scene and such the surroundings that met the eye of young John Geddes when he first saw the light, about the month—as near as we can now ascertain—of September 1797. He was not an only child, but, by the early death of a younger brother, James, he became the only son, and he grew up with two sisters (Helen and Elizabeth), both of whom predeceased him, so that he became eventually the last of his family-stem, and the sole bearer in that stem of the family name. His mother, whose name was Helen Annand, died in 1811 at an early age, but his father, who reached the age of 65, watched over his youthful years, so that young John grew up to manhood under the paternal roof. Whether his father had any foresight or perception of his son's high spirit and aspirations does not clearly appear; the elder John Geddes, for he bore the same name, was a plain man of simple common-sense, shrewd and "sanschach," but probably schooled by hard experience to canny and cautious ways of life rather than any aspiring views. Hence, having only one

son to whom he had to leave the paternal acres and the household, with such guardianship as would keep house above his two daughters' heads, the elder John could not be expected to encourage the younger's aspirations after a higher station, or favour his views toward education as the ladder whereby to reach such higher station. My father therefore regarded the early death of his brother James as one of the calamities of his life, since it was the cause of his ambition being blocked, so that he became a prisoner to his native glen.

Although, as we have seen, the family name occurs in the list of pollable persons of the parish about Queen Anne's time, the particular line to which my father belonged cannot be clearly traced further back than about 1760, when it virtually commences with James Geddes, in Braeton of Glenmarkie, who was my father's grandfather. This James Geddes is found in 1775 making his last Will and Testament, of which the holograph still remains, made out in due form by worthy Mr John Touch, minister of Mortlach, in which parish Braeton happened at that date to be situated. The impression one obtains from it of the worth in every sense of the Testator is pleasing to contemplate, implying that the parties concerned were good substantial folks of fair standing in the country-side.

The elder son of the testator, called William Geddes,

uncle of my father, continued to reside at this quiet homestead of the Braeton, which lies in the throat of the side-glen formed by the Marky Burn as it issues from the wide basin known as Glenmarkie. It was within easy walking distance of Bodylair, where the younger son John had settled himself, and being more sunny and sheltered, was reckoned, though a smaller holding, a more genial place than Bodylair.* Here at all events dwelt in the old "stamm-haus," Uncle William, along with his sister, Aunt Helen, both being unmarried, and these, from the traditions regarding them, seem to have been somewhat of "characters" in their frugal, primitive ways.† In the frequent

* The Saxon name of Braeton shows, however, that it was not so ancient a place as Bodylair, whose Gaelic origin, whatever be its interpretation, seems unmistakable. Many were the jokes my father had to bear, and also my mother from her Mortlach friends, because of the supposed Saxon interpretation of Bodylair.

† Frugality was in those days to the occupants of such homesteads a virtue ingrained into their mind, and burned, as it were, into their being. One of the characteristics of my father was a respect, approaching to veneration, for the cereals as forming human food: he had seen hardships, "nae mows," in such bad years as 1817, when he had to gather with "dirlin' fingers" the half-ripened corn out of early fallen wreaths of snow. He could tell sad tales of hardship through poor food, and tradition had carried down to him fearful tales of the "seaven ill years" in the time of Queen Anne, when the poor people "bled the cattle" at intervals to keep in their own life, and gathered sea-ware as food and fodder—so ran the harrowing tales. More reliable and authentic were the stories of the "Peasemeal time"—otherwise the famine of 1783—when the Government had to open the stores of pease meal provided for the American War, in order to feed the starving people of the

goings to and fro between the two households, young John as a boy was sometimes domiciled at Braeton, and my father counted it a joyful incident to get a few days there, as it was unlike Bodylair in having a running brook beside it, full of trouts, and rich in pools for wading and guddling and puddling as boys delight to do in the happy days when they can go barefoot, heedless of bonnet and all

North. Details can still be found in the pages of Ramsay of Ochtertyre's Memoirs, Vol. II.; Forbes's Life of Beattie, II., p. 114; also Sir John Sinclair's Statistical Account; as, *e.g.*, in the account of the Parish of Monquhitter, near Turriff, which suffered much at that stern time. While feeling, as we said, a sort of sacramental reverence for the staff of life, such as in these days of Free Trade is an emotion, rare if not impossible, my father loved to bring a sparkle of wit into any sombre scene, and one of his stories related to the conversation of two cronies on the subject of the "ill year," and the exclamation, somewhat Hibernian, of one of them—"Eh, man, wasna my mither lucky, an' didna she loup a gutter,' at de'et *afore* the year eighty-twa?" Though he would laugh at a Highlandman of his acquaintance who, having once been half-starved, could never talk about anything except "meat," he was exceedingly tender-hearted and considerate whenever there was any risk of snow-drift or exposure in the case of young people, whom he liked to see, when in the neighbourhood of Corsmaul, "weel happit an' warm." This sense of misery from cold affected his judgment also in estimating poetry. I remember once when trying to give him some insight into Wordsworth, in order to wean him from, as I then thought, his too great devotion to Byron, I lighted unfortunately on the charming little gem, beginning "Dear child of Nature, let them rail," and thought its sweetness was making the due impression, but found the reverse was the case. He heard with decent patience till the fine simile as to old age at the end, which did not suit *him* at all. "Lovely as a Lapland night" was an idea that fairly upset his imagination, as a picture not of loveliness but to him of misery, and so in my endeavour to convert him to the Wordsworth mood, I was left on that occasion *hors de combat*.

superfluous conventionalities. In these visits he found Aunt Helen a supremely stern old dame, not only virtuous herself but the cause of virtue in others, to every one that came within the whiff of her sharp tongue, a terror to evil-doers, as my father described her, by her frown as well as sarcastic jibes. Whether we can add the companion compliment of being "a praise to them that do well" is less apparent: my father's recollection of her, however, was of one "frosty but kindly." Of the two inmates of Braeton, she was reputed much the stronger spirit, and the uncle and aunt, as they sat "crackin'" on either side of the peat fire, with the little nephew on the stool between them, would ply him with a long string of questions as to what was going on at Bodylair, in which interrogations Aunt Helen, with female curiosity, bore always the leading part. She would question him as to the "kye" and the "yield nowt," and catechised him as to the number of calves, what "rucks" remained over in the farm-yard, and so on, to all of which young John gave answers more or less informing and satisfactory. "An' fou mony hens ha'e ye this spring at Bodylair?" This was a poser. The young deponent shook his head, peered into the fire for an answer, and at last said "he could na weel tell." At no time of his life did my father care much for the poultry part of his stock, and in after time he rather tolerated than

cherished them, being often "riled" into rages because of their untidy scrapings in his gardening plots and their provoking depredations in early harvest among the yellow corn.* So even in his youth, as he delighted to confess, he felt, if not aversion, at least indifference, and hence the incident of his being nonplussed by this question of Aunt Helen's. After a long pause of general silence, as if the subject had vanished, the aunt said to her brother across the ingle, "Hech, man, he winna be sharp." She dropped this remark, thinking it would fall unobserved; but the urchin was sharp enough to notice it and to lay up the terms of it in his memory, though the full import of it may have dawned more fully upon him only in after time. The old couple, who had no heirs of their own, were of course taking their measure of him, to see whether he was likely to be worthy of receiving any little inheritance which they could put his way, and hence eventually any patrimony my father had came mostly from that quarter, notwithstanding the unfortunate reply as to the poultry at Bodylair.

The small holdings of Braeton and Bodylair were situated in a mere nook of the vast estates of the Fife

* Neither pigs nor poultry were in great favour with John Geddes. He had a Jewish aversion to ham, and the pig, whether living or dead, in sty or at table, he did not care about, and would jocularly say, "The creatur is condemned in baith Testaments, sae *it* canna be guid."

family of Duff, to whom three-fourths of the parish, all but Beldorney, then belonged. The great ascendency of that now Ducal House had long drawn the wondering eyes of the North of Scotland as well as the upper strath of Deveron, much of which they owned, but which in the multiplicity of their acres they hardly ever visited. If, however, they came seldom to admire the beauties of their domain, they were lenient in their pecuniary requirements, and there was no rack-renting on the Fife Estates. At the period when the juvenile visit to Braeton took place, the head of the Fife house was the clever and cautious Earl James, who bought much land in a wise and prudent way, and became the second founder of the greatness of his house. His father, Wm. Duff of Braco, in the early part of last century, was the first of his family who reached the peerage, at first an Irish peerage, and he had put many estates together, not without jibes, as to the mode, from many of his contemporaries. Next to Braco in the successful management of his opulence was the afore-mentioned Earl James,*

* An anecdote is related of this same Earl James, showing the boy as father of the man. It appears that he and another brother were brought up during part of their youth at Balvenie, near the modern Dufftown, or as it was called before the rise of the house of Duff, "Laighie." A market was being held at "Laighie," and each of the boys, it is said, was honoured with a shilling to go and get a treat or "fairing" at the fair. The other brother soon got rid of *his* shilling, but the future Earl James brought back his coin intact. When asked why he had done so, his reply was, "Saul," said the boy, "I

who lived to 1809, so that my father grew up in a social atmosphere laden with stories of the fortune of the House of Fife.

Although, ere long, my father came to be admitted to audiences and even confidences of the eccentric Earl James, who is known as the Fourth Earl, and the first British peer,

saw naething 'at I likit better nor my shilling." This characteristic reply gives the key to his character as foreshadowing splendid accumulations.—Sometimes his caution led him to make political, though never financial, mistakes, and the following story which my father had from the later Earl James, is proof in that direction. In a conversation about Glass and Beldorney, this later Earl James mentioned as an interesting circumstance that his uncle for some reason neglected to secure the estate of Beldorney at the time when the old Gordons of Beldorney had to part with it, and when it was purchased for political reasons by the famous Master of the Rolls, Sir William Grant, who was a Tory, and therefore of opposite politics to those of the Fife family. The consequence was that, in the period before the Reform Bill, Banffshire was permanently harnessed under Tory regime, and bitter was the regret that the old Earl James felt at his blunder. "Ah! many a time," said the later Earl James, "many a time did I hear my uncle say: 'Ah, Lard, I'll never be d——d for not buying Beldorney, I hae repentit o't sae bitterly.'" The fact was, it let the Grants into the county representation, and they continued to have Banffshire as a stronghold till after the Reform Bill, when the Duff influence became at length predominant. Regarding the rough word of the Earl, it is odd that the same style of speech should have been employed by other geniuses of the last century, Frederick the Great (Carlyle's History, V. 638), and Robert Burns, in one of his letters, VI. 285 (Paterson Ed.), both claiming to have suffered enough in this world to exempt them from some penalty in the next.—The fourth Earl James, who honoured my father more than once with a long conversation at Duff House, was fond of hearing himself talk, and very communicative about incidents of his time. He confided to my father that one of his ambitions was to get his friend Lord

he grew up in his native parish without ever getting glimpse of lord or laird, there being then no resident proprietor, and within his visible horizon there loomed no figure of higher altitude socially than one or two wealthier farmers and the successive clergymen of the parish. Even the schoolmaster was not much of a figure, and while my father always spoke of Mr Anderson with respect and a certain affection for his only "Dominie," he learned no more than a little "counting" under him and good penmanship, which was always something. This teacher appears not to have possessed any high accomplishments, not being "college-bred," and so was unable to help a boy beyond the Latin rudiments. Even that initiation young Geddes never received. That old schoolmaster passed away, but meantime my father was drafted off to attend to the farm, and although, as we shall afterwards find, a new and really brilliant teacher succeeded who, had Geddes been under him, might have struck the spark of inspiration, it was then too late for my father to return to the school-desk, and thus the opportunity of a college course was for him lost for ever.

Byron down to Morayshire to visit him at Pluscarden Priory when once it was fitted up as a residence, in the hope that the bard might compose a poem in honour of Pluscarden, making it the Melrose of the North. The glories of the Elgin Cathedral and the land of Moray still lack a bard, and the Fife family have lost the opportunity by parting with the architectural gem of Pluscarden, which is no longer in their hands.

Of the parish clergymen in his time, two were notable as men of mark—one Mr Cooper, about the end of the century (died about 1796), and the other Mr John Cruickshank (incumbent 1799-1841), whose name has become historic as the first of the "Strathbogie seven" round whom raged the battle of the Disruption. The former appears to have been a man of considerable faculty, showing itself in a power of sarcasm rendering him formidable. Said one of his parishioners, talking to his neighbours about some caustic utterance, "Na, sirs, heard ye ever the like o' yon fae Mr Cooper?* He can say the bitterest things I ever

* A specimen of his sharpness still survives in the story of a dispute which Mr Cooper had with a Mr M'Gregor, who had the important holding of Glenmarkie and was of some local note. It concerned moss rights as to peat-casting—a not infrequent subject of contention, and according to the story, from words they were like to come to blows upon the ground. Said M'Gregor, "If it werena' for your cloth, sir, I wad gie you a guid licking, maybe a sackfu' o' sair banes." Whereupon Mr Cooper, "That need not stand in your way," and suiting the action to the word, stuck his staff into the moss bank and divested himself of his black coat. M'Gregor eventually thought better of it, and Mr Cooper wound up the matter with the flying boomerang, "Just so, Mr M'Gregor, as you are a coward, and I a clergyman, there will be no fighting here to-day, Mr M'Gregor." The sharpness of wit among the clergymen in those days of leisure was very notable, but perhaps the climax was that reached in the effusions of Mr Leslie of St Andrews Lhanbryde, a specimen of which may be seen preserved in Sheriff Rampini's History of Moray. It is the famous begging certificate to his bellman, who could not read, and was made to bear about the country the jocular record of his own miseries. It was a form of jocularity savouring of the witty eighteenth century, and a kindred morceau may be found in Carlyle's Frederick (III., 749), where the

heard tell o', *on cursed.*"* It is not known whether any influence radiated toward my father from this Mr Cooper, but he enjoyed the acquaintance of, and was in various ways much associated with, the later clergyman, Mr Cruickshank. This last was a man of considerable talent, who in his convivial hours was given to composing verses sometimes more pungent than pleasant,† partly upon him-

Prussian King banters an old dense chamberlain of the Polonius type, whom he belabours with mock praise, much in the crisp terse style exemplified by the Morayshire minister.

* Scotice—"without resorting to cursing." His tomb is a flat freestone on the south side of the Church of Glass, with inscription; and there was in old time a flaw in the stone which made a cup-like hollow, which we boys used as a "cuypie" in playing at marbles. The "cuypie" was a curiosity about which, when we enquired, we were gravely told it was made one time by the "Deil" when dancing on the rigging of the kirk, an' skipping on the minister's tombstone. The "cuypie" is now filled up with some cement, so the legend and its marvel have disappeared.

† Some flotsam and jetsam of these epitaphs still remain—this being in those days a favourite and even accepted form of clerical composition. One was on the worthy Mr Forbes of Grange (father of Dr Patrick Forbes), who in last century dabbled in agricultural chemistry, being great in decomposition of all kinds. It is said to have run—

> Relentless death hath decomposed, O strange,
> That wondrous man, the minister of Grange;
> His bones now lie to rot upon the plain,
> And raise successive crops of "gowden" grain.

Another touched on the modest shyness of the minister of Cairnie (a Mr Findlater), who rode a horse called Hector, but would rarely dismount to accept hospitality, always using the stereotyped formula, "Na, na, I canna

self, partly upon his co-presbyters, and, moreover, could and did discuss with my father such literary subjects as Gawin

stay." The fun of the epitaph is that he is represented as hlurting out the formula of declinature at the gate of heaven—

"Who comes," heaven's porter cries, "to quaff our nectar?"
"'Tis I," says Findlater, "and this is Hector."
"Come in, good sir, and take a seat, I pray."
"Na, thank you, sir," quoth Findlater, "*I canna stay.*"

The only other epitaph of which any inkling known to me has heen preserved was one on Dr Patrick Forbes, first of Boharm, and thereafter of Old Aberdeen, as also Professor of Humanity and Chemistry in King's College. As is well known, being a strong, shrewd man, he was rather ahsolute in his opinions and in his manner of expressing them, and to this the epitaph had alluded, closing with the lines—

. . . . Superior to our hate or love,
He laughs at Newton and disputes with Jove.

How far these can all he credited to Mr Cruickshank, the minister of Glass, may he douhtful, as some of them have been attributed to the witty and clever Mrs Allardyce of Forgue, the authoress of the Scots poem "The Guidwife at Hame." But, although these specimens show considerable verve, the gem of this sort of literature helongs to Donside, not to Deveron. It is the effusion of Mr Reid, when provoked hy the nettling of a fellow-Presbyter who had heen writing epitaphs on others. This co-Presbyter was named Alexander Low, of the parish of Keig, who, besides being notable for a defect in the use of one of his hands, was author of a History of Scotland in the almost prehistoric time of Picts and other ungenial folks, which History was very *dreich*, though it had the honour of a notice from Sir Walter in the Quarterly, which in this case was not "savage and tartarly." Pluming himself thereon, Mr Low hecame rather vain, and ventured on writing epitaphs on his hrethren in a way to nettle the dry and caustic Mr Reid of Kildrummy. "Here, man," said Reid, "would you like to hear one on you?" "Delighted," said Low, whereupon out came the grim, tart lines—

Douglas's Virgil,* and the poetry, then radiant on the near horizon, of Walter Scott. They exchanged ideas as to their preferences among his poems, Mr Cruickshank standing out for the Lady of the Lake as the masterpiece, while my father in those days contended for Marmion, a verdict for which he afterwards claimed some credit, when, to his

"Aneath this stane, upon this knowe,
Lies single-han'it Sauny Low:
He vrate a beuk 'at nae ane read,
And now, alas, the breet he's dead!"

It is worth noting that "Breet" in the last line is the same word as the English "brute," yet not the same, since all its Scottish associations when it is pronounced *Scotice*, give it a kindly, though contemptuous, sense. It comes near in tone to Burns' "chiel," which is not a cruel word like the English "brute."

Strange that various readings have sprung up even of this product of the century. In line 3 there is a form "'at nane *cud* read," but that fault might be due to the depth of the learning, whereas the actual fact of grim neglect barbs the arrow better.

* In one of his calls at Bodylair Mr Cruickshank, the minister, discovered a copy of "Gawin Douglas" which my father had got on loan. The minister was so delighted that he *would* carry off the folio then and there at his pony's saddlebow. The object was to search for the famous passage as to the stone of Sisyphus which floats current in broad Scots, and was attributed to Gawin Douglas. The minister was able to repeat bits of it from hearsay, reciting it with great gusto over the "O wow," which comes in tragically as the masterstroke. Of course, he did not succeed in finding the foundling, as Virgil is not the poet who describes the stone of Sisyphus, which belongs to the Odyssey, not to the Æneid. My father, however, felt a grudge at being thus deprived of his chance of due acquaintance with Gawin Douglas, as the book was never extricated from the Manse until the period of the loan had expired.

great satisfaction, he discovered in reading Sir Walter's life that the Poet himself was of the same opinion, ranking Marmion highest.*

By-and-by the Waverley Novels came forth, and flashed radiance into the Glen of Glass, by which time young Duguid the schoolmaster and my father had become inseparables, devouring, during good part of the forenights, the series as they appeared in succession. Congenial spirits were these twain, cultivating literature in a sense on less than oatmeal, with "sowens" for their supper, and, though the Schoolhouse and Bodylair were "a lang Scots mile" asunder, they had frequent foregatherings, like birds o' ae feather, aye flocking together.† The young, bright-eyed, black-powed, sprightly scholar was always a centre of fun and humour: full of quaint stories, he made the "fore-night" speed merrily, and young Geddes was sure to be his

* Poets are not always safe judges of their own productions, and there is some evidence that Sir Walter sometimes wavered in his likings among his own poems.

† On one occasion they were devouring one of the "Waverleys," and their enjoyment was interrupted by the entry of the schoolmaster's old and gaunt housekeeper, wanting, or rather screeching, to know how much "treacle" she should put into the "sowens" for their supper. "Hoot, woman," said young Duguid, loth to be disturbed in his reading aloud, "gang awa' an' mak' them the verra colour o' Peg Williamson's face." Peg Williamson was a brown mulatto who kept a shop in the Haugh of Glass, and was the only creature of colour in the place.

chum when anything notable was going on. It was the exciting time when Bonaparte was nearing his fall, and every now and then there were bonfires, with tar barrels and other barrels hardly less fiery, in celebration of the victories over him, which victories came in fleet succession. These bonfires took place generally on the Belnaboth hill, commanding a wide prospect, and thither all the parish gathered. At such times Duguid was at the head of the merriment, and, among other freaks, made wonderful fun on one occasion by setting two rustic fellows by the ears, and getting them to contend, after a certain round of *usquebaigh*, which of them could "roar" loudest and farthest. Duguid stood between the contending rustics—Corydon against Thyrsis—and after one had delivered himself of a tremendous yell, he would turn to the other, "Now, Synie, heard ye ever the like o' yon?" whereupon a rival vociferation burst out, invading the upper heavens. Ere long, however, the talent of young Duguid led to his promotion to a wider sphere, first to a mastership in Old Aberdeen Grammar School, and thereafter to the classical mastership of the Elgin Academy, where he made his most eminent mark in the world. He left Glass as schoolmaster, to return afterward as minister in succession to Mr Cruickshank, and during the short time that he was schoolmaster he did a remarkable work educationally, eliciting talent

that would have otherwise been dormant, developing youths who found their way to college, two of them as first bursars, and all by means of the ladder of good Latin taught them by Mr Duguid.

Such were the main influences brought to bear on the young lad, John Geddes, and such the general aspect of his parochial surroundings. The Parish, however, was, during his youth, fertile in "characters" contemporary, among whom he grew, and these will form the subject of our next Chapter.

Chapter II.

THE "CHARACTERS" OF THE PARISH.

IN a glen so remote and almost hermetically sealed from outer influence, it was natural that primitive and simple manners should be found prevailing, and that the struggle with the inclemencies of Nature should have developed considerable individuality, so that types of character should survive under such undisturbed development,

> Amid the sleep that is among the lonely hills.

There was no village in the parish, only a "clachan" or hamlet called "Haugh of Glass," which consisted of a few houses clustered together, with a "chop" or two and a smithy as the joint nucleus near a meal-mill; and all the cottages there were dotted down, standing at sixes and

sevens, like nuts tumbled out of a bag, in admired confusion. There was then (whatever there might have been in old time), only one great Fair, coming annually in the end of July and lasting two days, and this fair was held on the neighbouring hill, called the Glass Market Hill, always bringing round the same routine of buying, selling, and hiring, with a dull monotonous uniformity.

For ordinary commercial dealings, there lay adjacent not one but three market towns—Huntly, Keith, and the comparatively modern Dufftown—making a circle round on a radius of seven miles distance, each with its own attractive influence, but mutually counteractive, so that Glass suspended, as it were, *in equilibrio* between the rival communes, was allowed to form a region by itself, self-contained, and preserving its own independent type of peasantry. Agriculture, at the period when our narrative commences, was still in primitive condition: turnips and potatoes were only finding their way into the regular rotation; the former crop was for a long time sown, not in drills but broadcast; threshing-mills were hardly known, and weary was the work of threshing the corn by the flail in those days in the early mornings in order to provide the daily provender of straw for the hungry cattle, a work which was done by the thump of what Burns calls the "weary flinging tree"—a slavery from which the farm

servants of to-day may well be thankful to be delivered. Any spare time in summer, after the spring seed was laid down, was spent in the laborious work of casting, maturing, and carrying home the fuel for their winter fire, the last operation being often by means of pack saddles, there being no proper cart-roads among the mosses, and hence the summer work of raising a comfortable peat-stack was a formidable business. Still, the larger farmers, with their two and three pairs of horses, were able to obtain a good deal of leisure at Yule-time and at other seasons, and, though living in general sparingly, they could afford to give a feast upon occasion, when they had killed a mart, say, at Martinmas time, so that they were not without a sense of real enjoyment in life, more so, perhaps, than the present race of their successors, on whom the cares of modern life must be confessed to fall sometimes hard and heavy. In sketching the life of John Geddes, within its upland glen, it is proper, therefore, to include in the picture the chief "characters" that lit up his surroundings and were the outstanding figures within his little horizon.

First in this gallery, and foremost in the Bodylair corner of the parish, was the farmer of Hillockhead, generally known as "Hillocks," who was a considerable "persona" of the place and time. Possessed of a "breast-seat" in the loft of the church, "Hillocks" was also notable

as a patriarch in his way, having a large and thriving family, "sax sons," he used boastfully to say, "ilk ane o' them able to belt you o'er his k–nee," and, besides being a leading farmer, he acted as the auctioneer of the district. In his later years the tall man had got lean and scraggy, which led to a long-remembered remark on his personal appearance, which emerged in this way. On the occasion of the first arrival of William Duguid as schoolmaster in the parish, "Hillocks" was asked to keep the young dominie company at a Sunday's dinner, and after the ceremony was over and "Hillocks" had departed, the minister's wife remarked to young Duguid, as if to impress him with the dignities of the parish, "That's a very long-headed man, I assure you, that has just left us." "I winna say as to that," was Duguid's cautious reply, "but he is at ony rate a lang-neckit." It was this old auctioneer-farmer who gave young Geddes some inkling into business transactions in those days, whence it came that, as occasionally clerk at his auctions, the lad was thought to show talent and earned praise as a penman and accountant. Great indeed were the encomiums bestowed on the young official for smartness in keeping things straight as to the accounts. "Dyod," "Hillocks" would say, "I've had ministers, priests, an' lawyers a' clarkin' tae me, but never [the original was a worse word] ane o' them cuid match

this little birkie fae Bodylair." Whether there was any solid pudding or proper payment accompanying the puff of praise, remains untold; but it is probable that any little experience got in this way helped young Geddes at a later time, when he had to address himself to the business of book-keeping more effectually during the short episode in his after-life of setting up as a bookseller and "merchant" in Huntly. Old "Hillocks" was a man entirely sensible of the honour he thus bestowed on the juvenile, for he stood high in his own scale of estimation. Himself a Duff, he could, it was believed, count kin more or less remotely with the Duffs of the then Earldom, and this naturally heightened his altitude in the district. The farm which he occupied was reached from Church and School only through a long stretch of moorland, and there were divers tales of moving accidents amid moors and mosses, under snowstorms, in which "Hillocks" more than once came near to lose his life. On one occasion, the story ran that along with a shepherd he had been caught in a howling tornado of sleet and drift, obliterating the land-marks, and the two had lost their way. After plunging helplessly about, "Hillocks" sat down wearily on a stone and gave way to a kind of despair, as if he was never more to see his bairns or his fireside, and he exclaimed to the shepherd, "Wow, Jamie, ye'll be a sair miss'd man, I wyte,

gin ye dee, but, oh man, it'll be naething to the miss o' me." There was no great harm in this effusion of thinking aloud, only a sort of Falstaffian absurdity, rare, certainly, in a Scotsman. There was, however, a story that at times, after he had warmed up over a bowl of punch with some confidential crony, he would count up—(but here surely fame erred)—how many of the name of Duff would have to fall before he became Lord Fife! Nay, as a rousing whid, it was said he would wind up his crack with his crony with the jocular nonsense, "'Od man, gin the D——l wad only throw his mell amon' them,"* by which catastrophe he thought, or was alleged to think, there might be a clear field for himself and his folk for getting on in the world.

Alongside of the Duffs of Hillockhead, but superior in weight of purse as well as in numbers, was the race of the Gaulds, well known as the "Gaulds of Glass," tall, stalwart men all, averaging six feet two at the least, given a good

* "Hillocks" would seem to have fallen into the same vein as young Francis Sempill, a bit of a poet, when asked to rhyme as to his father and grandfather, who stood between him and the estate of Beltrees:

Thair livit three lairds into the West,
And their names were Beltrees;
An' the Deil wad tak' twa awa',
The third wad live at ease.

Whereupon "Sir James straikit his head, but *nippit his lug*." (Poems of the Sempills of Beltrees.)

deal to fighting, at least in their younger days, and sorely needing the admonition, which the minister sometimes addressed to them on the eve of a Glass market, in the form of the old caution among brethren, "See that ye fall not out by the way," it being frequently the case that "a sarkfu' o' sair banes," to use the Border phrase (Guy Mannering, ch. 45), was a frequent experience of these Dandie Dinmonts of the North after a Glass market. Some of the brave fellows found their way to fight their fill in Spain and the Peninsular Campaign, and the story went that one of them swam the Tagus, at a critical moment at Wellington's bidding, with a rope in his teeth to fasten it to some craft on the opposite bank, under a shower of hostile bullets, a piece of service for which he was supposed to have received a pension in later days. The heads of this race of Gaulds were two leading farmers of the name, cousins to each other, both of them cattle-dealers on a considerable scale. One of these was always denominated "Ednies," from his large and beautifully-situated farm named Edinglassie. It had the aspect of something like a manor-place, having been the actual seat of a laird in old time possessed of the powers of "pit and gallows," and it was alleged that these powers had to be exercised not always upon his own people, but upon Highland caterans who made raids occasionally

across the mountains to see what they could carry off.* This place of Edinglassie, after the rise of the Fife family, who absorbed it into their great domain, subsided into the residence of a factor, and after a time still further sunk down to be the abode of a big, stalwart farmer, as we have mentioned, "Ednies" by appellation. It was the time when cattle-droving to Falkirk was the order of the day, and "Ednies," who was a good judge of cattle, was able to pick up good animals at smaller prices in the North, and make a good profit by selling them to dealers in the South. He was, therefore, never happy save among the nolt, or, as he called them, "the Beass," and amassed in time a good amount of money, putting son after son into large farms, and without being at all miserly in his ways, leaving behind him also a creditable knot of money for those days, which knot, however, after his death, got soon unloosed and dispersed. A cottager of some taste who lived opposite one of his fields across the river once trysted "Ednies" to come across and see his flowers and nick-nacks. The drover-farmer stumped about with his heavy footfalls among the trim plots of the cottager, looking at this and the other

* One of the stories about this old Laird of Edinglassie was his capture of eighteen Highlandmen who had come on a raid, and whom, to the number of 17, he buried in a plot called afterwards the "Highlandmen's Mossie." The 18th was let off with his life, as he accepted the bargain of hanging the rest.

flower, and when the display was over, he grunted out as his best acknowledgment on the occasion, "Hech, mon, ye'll never be rich." "Whilk cam ower true," as Spalding says; at the same time, it is proper to say, the cottager had chosen *his* part, and had a fair amount of happiness without the riches, which "Ednies" looked on as the "be-all" here below. It is right to add that "Ednies" took rather a fancy to the young Geddes of Bodylair, and offered to help him into a larger farm, but my father thought it better to sail his own canoe with no borrowed sails.

Another Gauld, besides "Ednies," but superior to him in style, and not less fortunate in his dealings, was the farmer of Parkhall, an old staid bachelor who seldom spoke a word but thought much, his fighting days, if he ever had any, being long since over, and he, too, amassed by good management a deal of money, part of which he left as an endowment to female education in his native parish. With quiet demeanour, and always clad in good, well-brushed broad cloth, Parkhall drove business at markets in a much more gentlemanly style than his cousin "Ednies," and he was never seen "touched" in gait or speech through any imbibing of the mountain dew. "Parkie" had his peculiarities, however, but these savoured of superstition and old world ways. He "sained" his byres regularly at certain seasons, lining them with rowan tree sprays, in order to

keep witches away, and, in his cool, calm way, expressed himself as if he believed in predestination. On one occasion, at a market, he had promised to "oblige" a small farmer, who had once been a servant to him, with the benefit of his advice, much valued, as to the choice of a certain animal, a young colt, it is believed, which the small farmer rather coveted, and the latter became impatient that his friend should perform his promise, and come and give him the benefit of his advice. "Parkie" happened to be busy conferring on business over a "juggie" with another friend in a tent, and the impatient farmer ventured to give him a nudge of the elbow, as much as to say, "Come away, man, and look at this young animal, lest it be picked away by another buyer." "Parkie" coolly turned round and said, "Nae hurry, Jamie: gin ye be gaun to get that beastie, there'll naebody take it frae you." A fine stalwart old fellow was "Parkie," and much respect was felt by my father for his judgment and good sense.

Of a different type from these money-making farmers was "Auchnies," as he was called, otherwise Bonnyman of Auchinhandock, who took life rather easy, and was a shrewd, witty carle, who could give a Roland for an Oliver with good interest any day. He liked to interlard his speech with the broadest Scotch, as when he ventured

to tell the Minister, in answer to an inquiry why the "gudeman" did not put in an appearance at the annual catechising held at Auchinhandock, "Ye see, sir, I got sic a forlaithie* o' the carritches when I wis a loun, I canna stan' mair o' them when I am auld." His period was already passing away when my father was yet young, but the man had been a "power" in the parish in the previous generation. The great incident in his life was the part he took in a great lawsuit of the district, a huge embroglio presenting not a few elements of romance, and Bonnyman was a leading champion on one side, for the cause, as he accounted it, of the oppressed. It was a contested Will-case, and concerned the property of a West Indian planter (Williamson) from Jamaica, who had built a slated house overlooking the vale, and still existing as the Cot-town, whither he had retired to die in Glass. There was a child of his by a negro mother that had come to Scotland also, whose rights, as well as those of a surviving sister of the deceased, were endangered,† and a mysterious second Will had been produced destining the Planter's money away from both these his natural heirs, and conveying it to folk, other than his kith

* *i.e.*, a satiety.

† The Peg Williamson referred to in the note on page 23.

and kin, residing at Edinglassie. A factor of the name of Lieutenant Fyfe (the folk gave him the courtesy title of Captain) was the party compromised in the story, and Bonnyman withstood his alleged rapacity, averring that the signature of Williamson to the second and fraudulent Will was obtained *in articulo mortis*, and there was even a darker suspicion that the dead man's hand was made to trace the attesting signature. There was a deal of hard swearing somewhere, and the upholders of the Will were said to have declared on oath that there was "life" in the man at the time of the signature, the salvo to their conscience being that they had got a humble-bee which they closed within the dead man's mouth at the time of the signing of the Will. It is a ghastly story, and we may well conceive that the feud ran high between Bonnyman and Captain Fyfe, the position of the former reminding us, on a small scale, of that of Pym determining never to let Strafford go, for "Auchnies" was known to have told Fyfe: "I'll never quit grip o' ye, my man, sae lang's ye hae a pleugh-stilt for a pyet to sit on." And it "cam true": Bonnyman sat like a corby* on his

* The story goes that Bonnyman went the length of inciting a character called "Frostie" to bawl out ribaldry in the streets of Huntly against Captain Fyfe, to some such effect as this:

Jamie Fyfe, Jamie Fyfe,
On your life, on your life,
Will ye tak' hame a peck o' saut
To *my* wife, Jamie Fyfe?

path, and Captain Fyfe had ultimately to succumb, a ruined man.*

One of the victims in the above lawsuit, viz., James Gordon, deserves further notice. He belonged to a family

* The case went ultimately to the House of Lords, on an appeal by Fyfe. In Paton's Records of Cases on Appeal from Scotland (III. 478) the following entry appears :—

"Lieutenant James Fyfe in Edinglassie and Archibald Young, Procurator-Fiscal of Banff. } *Appellants.*

Margaret Williamson, wife of James Gordon in Haugh of Edinglassie, and the said James Gordon for his interest." } *Respondents.*

The following is the Preamble to the Pleas :—

"Reduction of Will—Fraud and Circumvention—Damages for Wrongous Imprisonment.—A party had made two several Wills, leaving to his relatives his whole fortune, upwards of £3000. Six days before his death, and while *in extremis*, Lieutenant Fyfe, a mere stranger to him in blood, employed a notary to come to Fyfe's house to write out a Will in his favour. They then went to the house of the deceased and had it executed, Mr Fyfe procuring the former Will and burning it without any instructions from the deceased. Held the Will reducible and reduced accordingly. The sister of the deceased, along with her husband, having resisted Fyfe's attempt to get delivery of the papers and repositories, in consequence of which a warrant of the sheriff was obtained and an officer with a party of soldiers appeared and dragged off her husband to prison. Held the imprisonment illegal and damages awarded in consequence."

Fyfe appealed to the House of Lords against the interlocutors, but appeal was dismissed and interlocutors affirmed.

Counsel for the Appellants was William Grant, no doubt the famous Sir William Grant, afterwards of Beldorney, and Master of the Rolls; and foremost for the Respondents was Sir J. Scott, afterwards the great Lord Eldon.

The Williamsons won, but the victory was fruitless; the law expenses swallowed up the money, and nothing could be recovered from the ruined Lieutenant Fyfe.

of Gordons, who were notable as Glass characters, a somewhat queer and, some thought, "nae canny" group of folk; generally big tall men like the Gaulds, but with a touch of "diablerie" about them. They were distinguished by wearing red worsted night-caps with drooping tip, and they had some knowledge of plant-nature, whence they dealt in simples for diseases, whether of men or beasts. One of them was supposed to be the best cow-doctor and horse-healer for miles around; he was generally known as "Cotties," from living at one time at the place called "Cot-town." On one occasion, when my father was about to be married, he had called in the services of "Cotties" to attend some ailing creature, and when he arrived my father happened to be busy plastering or fitting up some non-descript addition to the house at Bodylair, where "Cotties" found him standing trowel in hand. "An what kin' o' a place div ye mean this furlygig to be?" said "Cotties." "We're gaun to make it, maybe, a norsery" was my father's reply, with a twinkle in his eye. "Aye, aye, my lawd," was the quick rejoinder, "it'll be time eneuch to cry 'tickie' when the chuckies [chickens] come." It was clear that there was no getting behind "Cotties" in repartee.*

* In the early stages of the Williamson lawsuit, "Cotties" got imprisoned for wrongous resistance to the execution of the reputedly fraudulent Will. The cool fellow kept his equanimity square, and succeeded in getting fun out of his

It is to be feared that "Cotties" and his clan were like Peter Bell, fully as much dreaded as they were respected, the belief being that they were "nae jist a'the-gither canny," and report had it that they had tried strange "cantraips" to obtain power over the invisible world. It was whispered that three of them had lain in wait in a tent on a hillside to catch the fern-seed on St John's Eve—that fern-seed which was supposed to flower in a moment—when by would come the Evil One and knock it down with his staff, lest any poor mortal snatching it might gain the gift of walking invisible. What progress "Cotties" and Co. made in these perilous conjunctures is not told: it was believed they got a "terrible fleg," and never tried the experiment again, but, at all events, as a family, they were supposed to have queerest encounters. One of them, "Burnies," as he was called, from Burn of Oldyne, where he lived, was out on a veterinary errand one dark night, and, when crossing the wooden bridge of Wallakirk, close to the old burial-ground of that name, he met, according to the story, a strange figure on the middle of the bridge. The figure accosted him, and called him by

immurement. In the Banff jail he stumbled on a fellow prisoner, incarcerated for debt, and "Cotties" at once inquired at his fellow inmate, "Aye, an' what way are *ye* here, man?" "Ower little siller," was the reply." "Dyod," said "Cotties," "sic a terrible queer wardle; I'm here for ower muckle," alluding to the inheritance of the West Indian Planter.

his name: "Cauld nicht, 'Burnies'; lat's see your sneeshin, man." "Hoot aye," says "Burnies," and held out his mull. The stranger partook and returned the mull, but "Burnies," in receiving it back, found it hot, so hot that he had to roll it from hand to hand to keep himself from being burned to the bone. "Ye're gaun to see an unweel stirk, 'Burnies,' and I'm awa' to Dollas* till a card-table," continued the figure, adding, with eldritch glee, "an' I'm gaun to *get ane* the nicht. "An' it cam' true," said "Burnies," "for they killed a man in Dollas that same nicht."

Such were some of the stories that floated round the firesides of Glass in the early days of the century, when young John Geddes was growing up, and I am not sure that my father was ever able, though he laughed at these stories, to divest himself of a kind of semi-belief that there was something after all in these tales of uncanny power. It was a belief at all events firmly ingrained among the general run of the people, and one of the picturesque "characters," Geordie (Robertson) o' Innermarkie, whom we now introduce, was fully persuaded of the existence of "witches, deils, and hobgoblins." He was greatly plagued with stones on his fields, and he gave as the only explanation, "Dyod, man, the deil jist dings on stanes on Innermarkie." Geordie was a small farmer of a type socially below our

* Dollas is now Dallas, in Moray, among the uplands of the Lossie.

first three figures; he might be known by his broad bonnet with red knob, and knee-breeches; he was innocent of either reading or writing, but he could drive cattle successfully all the way to Falkirk and Amulree, making long journeys and also some money. His longest expedition was one into the heart of England in search of a dealer who had cheated him of some money, and it was an affair for a winter's forenight to hear the outs and ins of that "Anabasis." On one occasion of a less heroic kind, Geordie had condescended to take the top of the coach in a journey into Aberdeen, and when asked about the expedition, he said, "For the first mile or twa, ye see, it was funny, but efter that it grew fyky, an' I didna care about it": which is the experience of most travellers who begin locomotion of that sort late in life. It was on the arrival of this coach in Aberdeen that Geordie had an interview, as he afterwards used to relate, "wi' a chiel wi' ropes twisted roun' his shouther," and the apparition startled Geordie, whose thoughts ran a good deal about sheep-stealing and hanging; and so when the humble porter offered his services to help with his luggage, Geordie's imagination conjured up the "city hangman," ready to do duty on the lieges. Yet, for all his "glaikitness" in town matters, he was a good shrewd judge of the right side of a shilling. Standing in Castle Street in Aberdeen, a friend pointed out to him the

famous Union Buildings, then just erected at great cost, and told him they had cost as much as would buy Beldorney, the beautiful estate in Glass previously referred to. Geordie turned himself right round, and said, "By my saul, gin I had them baith in my offer, I ken whilk I wad tak'." With the plainest exterior, he had yet a tender heart, though the tenderness sometimes showed itself in odd ways. He had the misfortune to lose his wife, and in conveying her remains on the hand-spokes in the old country fashion over the rough road to the kirkyard, Geordie got alarmed as to hurting, or at least disturbing, the corpse owing to the jolting. He said audibly, "Na, sirs, dinna hotter*; she wadna like it." Stories of this kind about Geordie were rife in those far-away days, before railways and the three R's had come to make most things monotonous and many folks commonplace.

Another local "character" was known as Saunders Kemmy (phonetic spelling of his name), a rustic hailing from Cabrach, with one eye, who set up for a time as a merchant, making a mess of things and then "bursting" in bankruptcy. The story goes that, when in Aberdeen, he was treated by one of the wholesale merchants from whom he had ordered largely, to a little entertainment of cake and wine, and when Sandy was asked "which wine, port,

* Hotter, *i.e.*, joggle roughly.

sherry, or claret, he would be helped to," "Saul," said Sandy, "we'll try all," a saying that became a proverb at table current in the strath. By some odd stroke of fortune, Sandy had been furnished with a credit cash-account at a bank, the mysteries of which he was rather a novice in, for on one occasion Sandy had been drawing liberally on the resources thus available, like a Faust in Auerbach's cellar, and after pocketing a handful of pound-notes supplied to him over the counter, he went outside and counted them, whereupon, struck with the novelty of the phenomenon, the "gleyt" creature returned to the bank office, and, half-opening the folding-doors, called out to the clerks at the counter, "Saul, billies, I doot this winna *lest*." Neither it did; for Sandy became a bankrupt in no time, leaving a name to smile at up and down the glen.

These were all living characters who were well remembered as having walked about in the flesh in their day and generation. There were, however, others who were almost mythical, who seemed to be outside the horizon, even in my father's recollection, and yet they frequently loomed in the background of his stories, associated with proverbs current on the riverside. One of these went by the name of "Willie Birnie," and some floating sayings were credited to him of the kind called *sanschach* (or knowing) and pawky. The author of these sayings seems to have been a real

character, apparently located about Glenmarkie, in a previous generation, one of the old type of Scotch farm servant, who was a kind of privileged person about any old place: one who took an interest in things quite as much as the family did itself, always identifying himself with the honour of the house, and speaking of "*oor* nowt" and "*oor* girse" with the pride and solidarity of feeling of the "auld times." To all appearance, "Willie Birnie" was a character that might have grown, under proper development, to be like "Jamie Fleemin" among "Feels," but "Feels" of the Shakesperian vein. Willie could take it easy when it suited him, and it is related of him that in the winter mornings he was not particularly given to early rising, whence he stipulated as a condition of his engagement that he was not to rise in the mornings "till he cud see the tweedle on the caunass." This meant, until he could discern the pattern or twill on the sheet or canvas of his bed, and the stipulation was a capital way of securing in the winter mornings a good lease of comfortable repose.* A parallel story runs that on some morning Willie had been rather late in appearing, and was the last to join the other

* Deliberation seems to have been the keynote of Willie's course. He had been jibed one day for the slowness of his progress on a cob bound for Huntly. "Haud ye your tongue, man: deil hurry them 'at hurries ither" (*i.e.*, that hurries their neighbour).

servants at breakfast. His employer called out to him in remonstrance, "Aye hindmost, Willie!" "Lord bless you," said Willie, "somebody *maun* be hindmost," an incontrovertible proposition which became a current proverb in the parish, and marked out Willie as a potential philosopher of the Kantian school, determining that there were propositions valid *a priori* without needing any *a posteriori* experience in confirmation. Among other utterances of Willie, when criticising in his own way any sermons that did not please him, he would wind up with, "'Deed sir, to tell you truth, I cudna mak' out tap, tail, nor mane o't." Familiar with the beasts handled every day, Willie simply used the animal imagery that came nearest to his hand, and Aristotle himself could not have desiderated more apt imagery for his doctrine when he claimed that the perfection of a drama was to have a proper beginning, a proper middle or denouement, and a proper ending. It was not uncommon in a late spring, when the poor cottars had eaten up their winter oats, to find themselves short of seed, and hence parties set out in spring to beg a supply of corn for sowing purposes. This was called "thigging," and Willie is said to have been once at Bodylair, in the first John Geddes's time, on such an errand. "Aye thiggin', Willie; but fan am I to get payment?" "Bless your soul, man," said Willie, "fan I hae maist, an' ye hae

least." This rejoinder reminds of the Irish beggar's reply to Sir Walter when he gave him a shilling, intending only a sixpence, but remarking, "Pat, you owe me a sixpence." "Ach, your Riverence, may your Honour live till I pay you." So much for the Eponymus author of fireside Glass sayings who was known as Willie Birnie.

There were, however, other proverbs floating about, bearing a different mark of locality, and not credited to Willie Birnie. One of these was from Glass itself. At the farm of Waterside, close to what is now Blairmore House, there lived, in the generation preceding that to which my father belonged, a farmer who was given to card-playing, and, in his zeal for victory, was not very scrupulous as to the means. He sometimes, it was alleged, secreted at the game of "Loo" a spare "Monsey," as the people called it —that is, a Knave or Monsieur—hidden up his sleeve, but on one occasion his memory betrayed him and he produced the secreted Monsey, while the other or real Monsey of the pack was already in the field. In such a complication there was naturally a scene and an explosion, and it became a proverb as to any awkward combination or collision that it was a case of "'ramcounterin'' ane anither, like Waterside's twa Monseys."*

* The perfection of dry humour, racy of the soil, comes out in the following story which my father used to tell, located in a neighbouring parish, that

The other proverb that may be here adduced was not of Glass origin, being one that had wandered up from the Garioch. It belonged, it is to be feared, to the time when "old women" were apt to be hauled up as "witches," and were liable to be condemned on very superficial evidence. A laird of Westhall, near Oyne, had figured upon some inquest of this kind, for which he had apparently been called afterwards in question, and all the defence or explanation he was able to make regarding the victim was—"Saul, ony way, she didna lyeuk [look] sair." Thence came the saying, "Jist like Wastha's witch, she didna lyeuk sair." Little touches of this sort, contributed frequently by my father, served to enliven the fireside conversation, and supplied a pleasant piquancy, not without a *soupçon* of quiet satisfaction, when one glanced at the contrast thence often suggested betwixt things present and things past.

of Drumblade, where the Huntly roads diverged, leading respectively to the county towns of Banff and Aberdeen. Two sporting sparks on a tour had come across a Drumblade farmer (I forget his name, but he was a notable in his time), working late in his field on a summer evening at the roadside. Finding him a "character," they tried to take their fun off him, pretending to inquire how he could instruct them as to the road. The farmer raised himself from a stooping posture, and, shading his eyes from the rays of the setting sun, wound up by saying, "Hech, sirs, half-a-mile on ye come to a fork in the road: the tae road therefter tak's you to the toon o' Banff, and the tither to the toon o' Aberdeen, an' (lifting up his bonnet as good-bye) *there's a gallows at baith.*"

Chapter III.

INFLUENCES OF LITERATURE AND MUSIC.

SUCH were the general surroundings, social and parochial, in which John Geddes had to grow up, and such the chief characters figuring in the little arena where he had to play his part. The education furnished by the dominie in the parish school during his boyhood was, as we have seen, scanty and poor, without much of a stimulus to higher things, and the youth was therefore thrown upon his own resources for any higher culture. The succeeding dominie was of a higher type, but, as before remarked, he came too late to influence John Geddes so as to be in time for taking advantage of such an opportunity, but he profited much by the indirect stimulus communicated by the new teacher, Wm. Duguid. The Bible and Burns, with any variety of chap-books, formed his early mental fare, after which the great literary phenomenon of the day—the Waverley

Novels—made a distinct epoch in his mental development; and this was followed or accompanied by a solid course of history, in which, by gradual steps, if slow, he managed to make a tolerably close acquaintance with Hume, Robertson, and Gibbon. The "Decline and Fall" he had read more than once, and it remained to the last one of his monumental favourites, rather to be worshipped than criticised. Local history, such as Spalding's "Trubles," he delighted in, and he even devoured the volumes of the Old Statistical Account of Scotland in order to pick out the local lore. The fact was, John Geddes was a born antiquary, and might have been, under favouring influences, an accomplished archæologist. How he delighted to visit any new romantic spot or an old ruin, all his friends recognised as an amiable weakness, and one can well believe that it was his interest in antiquities that encouraged him to place his own boy with greater confidence under Duguid's care in such an educational centre as Elgin, the old buildings of which had for him a magnetic attraction through the pathos of their ruined beauty and their needlessly mangled magnificence.

The supreme literary influence of his life, however, alongside of that of Scott, was the poetry of Byron. Very early in his course he came under the spell of that proud and towering genius, and during the few years of his

merchant life in Huntly he had ample opportunity of following the erratic apparitions of the meteoric bard. In the circulating library which he organised in Huntly, the works of Byron found a conspicuous place, and much of his verse had been perused by him so often, that the finer passages he could repeat from memory.* The Fourth Canto of Childe Harold, as dealing with Rome, or, as he invariably called it, "Room," in the old Shakesperian pronunciation, was a special favourite, for there the admiration derived from Gibbon for the memories of the Eternal City was fanned into a flame, and in the later time of his life he mourned over the fate which had separated him from the tongue which could supply and feed such remembrances. In the days, too, when his eyesight failed, and he became afflicted with blindness, a well-stored memory stood him in good stead to beguile the weary hours, many of them at night, when he happened, as was often the case, to have a turn of sleeplessness, and then Byron was found to be the poet of whom he had laid up the most. It was, of course, Byron's

* It was only in the year 1837 that he treated himself to a copy of Byron's Collected Poems, and I remember the night when he brought it home from Huntly, on the eve of a polling day when he had given his vote in the County Election. With the true feeling of a Bibliopole, he would single out the "tippet" of the few leaves containing the Fourth Canto of Childe Harold, and astonish the rustics by telling them that the "tippet" at one time cost a price as high as the whole collected volume.

immense force and Titanic play of passion that attracted his young spirit, and the spell was never entirely removed. While he held that Scott had done most to contribute to the stores of enjoyment belonging to mankind, and, more than any single man, had made a bigger contribution to the sum of healthy human delight all the world over, he counted Byron, from his mastery of language and his tremendous energy, the greatest of English poets, and would, in argument, place him equal, if not superior, to Shakespeare: a judgment that few would now endorse outside the Byronic generation whom his genius overawed. It must farther be confessed that the influence thus exerted on my father was more potent than salutary, as exalting and glorifying force above feeling, and it is to be regretted that to a certain extent sentiments of a sarcastic and misanthropic kind ejected from the volcanic mind of Byron, not tending to increase his own happiness, found a certain reception, if not actual reflexion, in the furniture of his mind. Not that he ever gave way to the pessimism which culminates in Byron's poetry; yet, at times, the consciousness of his own powers confined in a narrow sphere aggravated his "noble rage," and produced an occasional cloud of discontent, from which, however, his natural hilarity soon, ultimately, emerged.

More than once he came under the temptation to flash

out into verse *à la Byron*, chiefly, however, in the comic vein, and in the Don Juan strain. Some humorous stanzas of his I have seen, showing considerable "go" and rhyming power; and in one longish poem of a burlesque kind in that vein, not now I fear recoverable, he described in the form of an Epistle to Duguid a semi-tragic incident that took place at a Christmas shooting match—Scene the Haugh of Glass. It was a "ploy" in those days to kill a "mart" and give a haunch of it as a prize to the best marksman, entry money being further levied from the competitors to pay their own prize and to cover outlay and expenses. The gathering proved a merry one at a slack or idle time; but it so happened on this particular occasion that, through some awkward or promiscuous firing, a young man was shot, receiving in his ribs a bullet, and he was "Ednies'" eldest son, known as "Newton." Fortunately, the youth was only wounded, and after six weeks recovered, but the whole business of the shooting of "Newton" gave rise to much talk, and so my father treated it in jocular fashion, after the quips and cranks of Don Juan. A copy of the *jeu-d'esprit* was sent to a bevy of his Glass friends then at Old Aberdeen under Duguid, and it afforded great delectation as retailing the latest "sensation" of the Glen.

Besides poetry, Music had its attractions, and a good

ear and fair voice enabled him to give and to get enjoyment from the fascinating art. At Church-Music,* as well as in the songs of Burns and Tom Moore, he was a fair proficient, and, though rarely produced to view, the violin in his hands yielded excellent entertainment. An early accident with a shearing-hook, affecting the flexibility of a finger-joint, prevented him from feeling the proper confidence in his command of the instrument, and with a proper pride he would rather not cultivate an art where he had the misgiving that he could not excel. Still, of an evening, his spirited renderings of Scotch airs and Strathspeys upon the violin gave pleasure, and, as regards vocal music, he could criticize intelligently the great singers he had chanced to hear, among these being Jenny Lind and Miss Stephens (the Countess of Essex), whose "Comin' through the Rye" had entranced him in his early days. One of the incidents on which he had reason to pride himself was his acquaintance with the famous composer, Marshall, the most eminent of our Trans-Grampian musicians. This gentleman, who had risen likewise to be factor on the Gordon estates, was resident for a portion of

* A Mr Leslie, of Fochabers, he always spoke of with much appreciation as his teacher in Church-Music, and, judging from the elaborate pieces in the text-books as used by that teacher, a considerable knowledge of part-music had been communicated.

the year at the stately farm of Keithmore in Auchindown, and became well known as a great "maestro" on the violin, having been the composer of several charming strains, such as the "Duke of Gordon's Birthday," "Marquis of Huntly's Farewell," "Craigellachie Bridge," &c. Among his best known titles to fame is the honour paid him by Robert Burns, who, in his too short visit to Gordon Castle, came across the gifted musician, whom he called "the first composer of Strathspeys of the age"—(Burns' Works, Vol. V., p. 442, Paterson's edition). The charming song, "O' a' the airts the win' can blaw," is sung to Marshall's air, so that, while the words are from Ayrshire, the melody on which it floats round the English-speaking world was born in Banffshire — (see p. 6 of Morine's "Genuine Scottish Melodies"). A handsome volume containing Marshall's "airs and compositions" was published by subscription about 1818, and my father, who was then in business at Huntly, was the means of disposing of a good many copies, much beyond the number that might have been anticipated in so small a district.* The composer

* A presentation copy of the "Airs," inscribed with the composer's own hand, and still at Blairmore in Glass, remained among my father's books as a treasure to be "warded for ever." The inscription, in firm clear hand, runs as follows :—

"Presented to Mr Geddes, Bodilair, parish of Glass, as a small token of respect from the Author."

paid him a special compliment showing his personal appreciation of this service, received him at Keithmore and spoke of coupling his name with some of his airs, an intention, however, which does not appear to have been fulfilled. It was on the occasion of this visit to Keithmore that young Geddes had the felicity of hearing the composer play some of his own compositions, and one in particular he counted a great treat to hear rendered on the "maestro's" favourite Cremona, the masterpiece of pathos, entitled, "Lament for Sir Harry Niven Lumsden," which is the dirge *par excellence* of Northern Scottish music, a sweet wail of most touching tenderness, of which any composer might be proud.

Such are a few of the indications of my father's "gift" in music, a faculty in which few of his own family were able to keep pace with him. Two of his special favourites among songs were the "Bannocks o' Barley Meal" and the "Burning o' Moscow," the one a patriotic song in praise of the Scottish "Thristle" and the other a humorous version of the fall of Napoleon; both somewhat lively specimens of the spirited lore that forms, at a certain stage, an excellent staple of the food of youth.

Jane Warmachis or Peddler 1867

Chapter IV.

TENOR AND INCIDENTS OF LIFE.

WITH these scraps of self-education, and amid such environment, John Geddes had grown up to manhood, and, though conscious of powers for which Glass offered no right sphere, he remained at home to fulfil his duty as a son and a brother. Schoolfellows he saw, not without envious regret on his part, passing into the outer world, some of them going not only to college, but to far lands—to the West Indies, then fairly flourishing, and the favourite field in those days for young enterprise; others to India and North America; and he himself was not without impulses to follow somewhere in their wake, but he had to resist any such wayward ambition. In after years the envious regret vanished, and he came round to the reconciling belief that, after all, his lot was a

happier, because a longer, one at home; for he sorrowfully admitted that all his youthful companions who had gone to the West Indies had succumbed long before reaching mature age. I remember him especially, in referring to one of these, quoting with great feeling the lines of Scott over the untimely grave of Dr Leyden:

> A distant and a deadly shore
> Holds Leyden's cold remains.

The tone in which he spoke convinced one that he was now reconciled to the ordering of Providence, which had chosen for him a life tame indeed and domestic, but longer and less precarious than his own ambition would have entailed.

One of his curious ventures, to which we have incidentally alluded, was to set up in the lifetime of his father as a "merchant" on the Square of Huntly, and this singular episode lasted about five years, to Whitsunday 1825, but came to an end soon after his father's death, which necessitated his return to reside at Bodylair. The origin of the Huntly venture connected itself with the possession of a tenement belonging to the Braeton uncle, William, who favoured his nephew so far as to instal him, in preference to another seemingly less deserving nephew, in a good house upon the Square, or chief place of the town, and there, with youthful alacrity, young John Geddes proceeded to set

up a business, in the sale of broadcloth for gentlemen's suits, combined with a bookshop and circulating library—the useful and ornamental being assorted in a curious combination. A considerable trade was the result, and he had numbers of customers. Although no conspicuous success was attained, he managed to keep things in equilibrium and got ends to meet, so that the uncle's inheritance fell to him ultimately, and young John became a feuar in Huntly. Travellers from Yorkshire representing great cloth-houses visited him regularly, some of them being merry fellows—strange to say—of Quakers, who took a fancy to him and trusted him with much. His own excursions on business led him beyond Aberdeen as far as Edinburgh, where he got alongside both of the booksellers and the publishers in that city. This first pilgrimage to Edinburgh he often spoke of as an era in his life. In those days it was made by coasting steamer, and the High Street of "Auld Reekie," with its portentously high houses, dwelt in his memory as altogether the most imposing sight in architecture he had ever beheld.

In his Huntly life there was naturally much more variety than the Glass routine could supply, and he made a number of acquaintances more or less stable and valuable. Dramatic companies would come round, and the bookseller's shop on the Square was the natural centre for

sale of tickets and for the manufacture of extemporised advertisements, which had then to be done by brush and pen, it being the period before 1837, when Huntly first knew a printing press. By a few deft strokes of his draughtsman-like hand, he produced brilliant placards, and he was rewarded by occasional admission to the green-room, and got insight into the orchestral and dramatic interiors of such companies. It was the time when the "Waverleys" were being dramatised, and there was a great run after "Rob Roy" and the rest, which served to keep his knowledge and interest fresh in these inspiring tales.

Meantime age and infirmity were telling on his father, and on his decease in 1823 it became evident that the Huntly episode must come to an end. It was not, however, till 1825 that young John wound up his affairs at Huntly and became farmer at Bodylair, resident on the old paternal acres, sorely against the grain, as he felt the place was too small and ungenial to afford him proper scope. Still he commenced bravely, and whether wisely or not, which may be doubted, laid down a deal of money and toil in building, in improving, in trenching, and, as he said, putting a fair face on the place. He doubled the arable area, added to it by wise diplomacy a good strip of fair land to the west, having obtained a share in the partition of an old neglected holding which formed part of West Bodylair, and the whole

he laid out by cross-staff on geometrical principles, so that the fields, both new and old, all ran square on a common base line.* The new territory he acquired was full of knots of "heathen" rocks, and he bravely engaged in boring and blasting them, so as to remove them out of the plough-path. On one occasion he was almost killed by a premature explosion. While he and another man were engaged in priming the shots, a rock rose in splinters, exploding around them, and it is doubtful if his eyesight ever fully recovered from the effects of that explosion.† Late at night he would continue reading the smallest type, and the above accident, coupled with the perpetual strain at night under what was then poor rush-light, is sufficient to account for the loss of sight, which formed the cloud of his declining years.

In enterprises of this order his life went on; erecting a

* In one of these fields, during some of these operations, among the "stooks" and "sheaves"—I could almost point out the spot in what was called the Langlands—my father first mentioned to me—it must have been about 1836 or thereby—that there were two Colleges in Aberdeen (these he named), and that I was to go to one of them and "grow a scholar." He was always dropping some piece of information or observation, and it lay near to his heart to secure for some of his family the aspiration after higher education from which he had been himself debarred.

† Another incident affecting seriously his eyesight was his gazing too assiduously, without proper precaution, at the sun in a great eclipse which took place, as I well remember, on a beautiful summer Sunday afternoon in 1836, just as the congregation were dispersing in the afternoon—a marvellous and memorable phenomenon.

threshing-mill driven by water-power, and constructing a reservoir for that power; bringing home tombstone from Elgin for his father's grave, not without adventures with sleepy tollmen by the way, who refused him passage at what they counted untimeous hours; and so on. Battles he had, too, with Highland drovers, who, on their way to Glass and other markets, came surging over Corsmaul and made free with his fields, not always contenting themselves, as Bailie Nicol Jarvie expressed it, "wi' a rug of his *moor-land* grass in the bygoing." But the most serious contention of his life was the battle he had to sustain once and again with the Duke's Huntly Factors, who were apt to encroach, as he thought, on his rights as a feuar, and to press too hard his duty as a vassal of the Duke. These rights turned upon the treatment and disposal of a narrow lane between tenements which went as the "Duke's Ell," and such an inter-space flanked his tenement on the Square of Huntly. The dispute thereby emerging gave him from first to last great trouble, and two successions of factors sought to bring his head to the grindstone regarding it. After his day's work at home, he sometimes needed to repair to Huntly to spend the night in erecting and watching defensive works, partly protective, partly retaliatory, and all this strategy he carried on under consultation with his shrewd cousin-friend, James Cruickshank, resident in

Huntly, who gave him the best advice and helped him through these grave embroglios. Though at great mental and physical cost, John Geddes succeeded in carrying his point, and brought the two Ducal factors (a father and a son) to acknowledge the rights he enjoyed as a feuar in reference to the "Duke's Ell," which rights they had, in his opinion, threatened to ignore.

Being now settled permanently in Bodylair, arrangements having been made for his two sisters, he married in November 1827. His partner in life, whom we learned to know and love as our mother, was a native of the sister strath watered by the Fiddich and Dullan, in the adjoining parish of Mortlach, and her name was Jane, a daughter of Peter Maconachie and Elizabeth Mitchell, the latter being of the family of Parkmore. These lived long at Hardhaugh, opposite to the ancient Church of Mortlach, and afterwards at Keithmore, where Peter Maconachie succeeded Mr Marshall, formerly mentioned, in the tenancy of the farm. Their daughter, Jane, was one of the older members of their family, and was a young woman of remarkably good looks and pleasing manners, as well as of unblemished character. Although by no means equal to my father in acquirements, she had yet made good use of her opportunities and in her own way possessed, among her mental gifts, a shrewdness, as well as

good feeling, that often served her in good stead, and endeared her greatly to her own household.

The Maconachies had come from Glenrinnes, and Peter, my maternal grandfather, who had settled at Hardhaugh, and was thence known all his life as "Hardies," had risen in the world, married well, and from small beginnings as a "merchant" and innkeeper, gave his family a good start in life, having sent one son to college, who became a schoolmaster and preacher,* while another rose to a good post in H.M. Customs at Liverpool. "Hardies," whom I well remember, was a man of few words, but pawky shrewdness; he dressed in picturesque style of the fashion of last century, in drab-cloth, with knee-breeches and cut-away coat with brass buttons, great flapped waistcoat and dangling watch-chains, suggesting a gentleman of the old school. The tie-wig of that older time had just disappeared, so I don't remember the pig-tail in the case of my grandfather; but in

* This son was the Rev. Al. Maconachie, who became schoolmaster of Strachan, in Kincardineshire. He was a superior man of his class, with a strongly scientific habit of mind, which gave him a turn toward astronomy and such subjects. His most notable acquaintance and friend was the redoubted Dr Francis Adam, of Banchory, famous as a physician, scientist, and classical scholar. Mr Maconachie was a fine penman, priding himself on his caligraphy, and he indulged occasionally in long epistles to my father, a specimen of which is subjoined, partly to show the neatness of his hand—like copper-plate—partly as a specimen of the round-about and rather cumbrous *Johnsonese* of a former generation.

the remote parish of Glass that appendage survived to about 1840 in the case of some very old folks coming in high dress to church. In process of time, Hardhaugh, which is a spot beautiful indeed but small, became too narrow for him, and, leaving a son in its possession, he removed, as we said, to the large and stately farm of Keithmore.

To this Keithmore, on the banks of the Fiddich, and within sight of the gaunt ruin of Auchindown Castle, our most notable and enjoyable excursions in our younger days were wont to be made. The bairns from Bodylair were always welcome to the hospitality of the kind old grand-parents, and if anything had been lacking, it would have been amply made up by the kindness of Aunt Jessie, or Jeanzie, as she was called, who, as a younger sister of my mother, was bounteous in cream and other rural delights beyond what wintry Bodylair could always bestow.* Life was altogether under more stately surroundings at Keithmore, where there were traces of old manor-house gentility still surviving—a breast-seat in the loft at the church, belonging properly to

* This aunt, the last of the Hardhaugh Maconachies, still survives at Minneapolis, in America, where, a widow, she sojourns with a son, and is (at this date, 1899) hale and hearty, though nearing ninety years. Green in the West be the place of her rest, for she was always kind, and would teach us the flowers in their season. I never see the Scabious blue flower without being reminded of her, for she told us it was "the hindmost flowrie that blows in the season," and such it is, bringing up—as she herself does in her generation —the last of the long procession of the year.

the Duke of Gordon when resident at Glenfiddich, but capable of being occupied in his absence by his largest farmer, Keithmore; also a spacious kitchen, in which there was a high bench called a "dais," occupying a whole side of the big ha', and suggestive of ancient wassail days and happy harvest homes.

The distance between Bodylair and Keithmore was not great as the crow flies, and as youngsters can trudge: probably four miles at the farthest, although, to drive, involved a much bigger circumbendibus: and owing to the conspicuous situation of Keithmore as the centre of its landscape, it was in full view of us juveniles from about a mile onward from Bodylair, so soon as we crossed the ridge of Corsmaul. The point where Keithmore first comes into view to the traveller from the Glass side descending Corsmaul strikes me still as opening up a prospect of remarkable character. Such it appeared to my youthful eyes, and the vision awoke in me my earliest perception of scenery, so that now, after all that I have seen of kindred sights, at least in Great Britain, I still place it high in the scale of admiration. Far away on its commanding eminence in the heart of the cup-like hollow, Keithmore stands the centre of the scene, and is viewed through a double range of heath-clad hills, which throw it into perspective and compose a framework for the picture; while

behind it, in the far distance, stretches like a curtain the fine waving line of the two rounded Conval Hills with their robe of firs, underneath their russet mantle of deep heather, and beyond these again, forming a splendid contrast, is the pointed peak of tall Benrinnes lifting its granite spear as the sentinel of the scene. The combination, as seen from Corsmaul, opens on the view like a vision, and, while it forms on the whole the most striking view of Benrinnes anywhere obtainable—the gleam of a lake or sheet of water being all that is wanting to compose an ideal scene—one almost feels as if Nature had exhibited of set purpose in the grouping of these hills the succession of the rounded or Romanesque arch in architecture surmounted and succeeded by the towering and pointed Gothic. In nearing Keithmore on these juvenile excursions, another sight, as already indicated, presented itself hardly less influential on the youthful mind—the old ruin of the Castle of Auchindown, on its conical hill, standing out in high relief with its gaping arches against the open sky—a grim skeleton of the Past, with its empty eye-sockets, bearing on its misty shoulders the memories of dark legends, sieges and conflagrations, in the olden time.

Such was the strath of Auchindown, from which our mother came, and such the associations which it possessed to our youthful minds. Very amusing it is now to recall

how there sprung up a regular rivalry between father and mother, pursued with all the eagerness of children, as to the respective amenities and historic prerogatives of their native dales. The contest, always carried on in good humour, ended in a drawn issue: if Glass seemed to win the day in having a river-in-chief, the Deveron, as against a mere affluent like the Fiddich, yet Fiddich was the tributary of a more lordly stream, the Spey; and if the extremely ancient saintship of "Wollac" at Wallakirk was no mean glory to Glass, it was considerably impaired by comparison with the distinction of Mortlach as having furnished a royal residence at Balvenie, and as claiming memories of Malcolm II. as well as Bishop Beyn, who severally honoured it with their presence.*

Meantime, John Geddes, or "Bodylair," as he was called, found himself not only a husband, but a father with a considerable family, and ten children eventually surrounded his hearth, of whom two died in comparative youth, and all save the youngest were born at Bodylair. All the while he went on improving his fields, liming, draining, and building, as he deemed, for good; the result

* Like Richie Monieplies, my father was always true to the honours of his native dale, and when he had nothing else to say to a visitor in praise of any spot, he would generally wind up with an apologetic line from Byron, "The scene was savage, but the scene was new."

being that, while his family increased, his little capital was not mounting up in parallel proportion, but was really decreasing. It is true that he succeeded in acquiring by purchase an additional feu in Huntly, adjoining the old one which he inherited, and he afterwards built on the site thus acquired; but at the same time it must be confessed that his farming at Bodylair was not a success. He felt it was a fight against nature and inclemency: the subsoil in many of the fields he would describe with a shudder as "cauld blue clay," and though he strove desperately to beautify the place, and even improve the climate, by efforts, among other things, to sow broom as shelter for the cattle, he had the grim feeling that, though he was able to keep his family together under the paternal roof, he was fighting a losing battle, and his capital was running done. His great aim was, therefore, to get shifted to a more genial farm, away from the hill-foot to the water-side.

Bad years and low prices for both corn and cattle, with sometimes crops of "yarr" owing to wet seasons, instead of golden grain, were his usual experience. Like the American farmer, he could say—

> On the farm, somehow or other,
> Storms kept chasing one another.

And then, in addition to the positive misfortunes, there was the natural disinclination of a proud spirit to mingle in

markets and to chaffer at bargain-making, a disinclination increased by his mercantile and bookish life in Huntly, which had rendered him averse to improve his fortunes in any easier way than by hard work and good ploughing. Though a good judge of cattle, he was a better grain-farmer than a rearer of stock, and Bodylair was rather a place for rearing young stock, or, as my father phrased it, "raising bones" for dealers to clothe with rotundity on happier pastures elsewhere. Moreover, sickness and a severe visitation of typhus fever in the spring of 1837 invaded Bodylair, and saddened his hearth by carrying off his eldest daughter, Annie, just as she was promising to be helpful, and was beginning to show a most sweet and capable nature. It was long before heart and purse recovered from this affliction, and the following year, 1838, brought its own calamity in the shape of a fearful and long-continued snowstorm, which spoiled the prospects of the crop for that year in localities even more highly favoured than Bodylair.*

In the end of 1839 he took the brave step of sending his eldest boy to the Elgin Academy, to enjoy higher

* The depth of the drifted snow-wreaths, continuing late into spring, was portentous. On a neighbouring farm of Blackbog, worse situated than even Bodylair, as it was close under the shadow of a hill, the snow had to be ploughed up before the ground could be reached for the proper cropping in the spring of 1838, a sight which I can never forget, having noticed it with a schoolboy's eyes.

training than was possible in Glass, and to be under the care of his old friend, William Duguid, after whom he had named his first-born boy, and who was then classical master in that seminary. The shortest distance between Elgin and Bodylair was fully 23 miles, and though the road was a picturesque one, through Auchindown and over the lovely iron bridge at Craigellachie, it was clear that the boy, who had to be boarded away from home, had few chances in the year, at such a distance in those days, of re-visiting the shelter of the paternal roof. The trial was a sore one to both parents, but, for the good of the boy, they bore the sacrifice bravely, notwithstanding the risks of town life to a country lad, and, under the divine blessing, the result was not a disappointment. The father's desire to create a scholar going to college was fully gratified, and the impulse to education thus given helped to draw the younger branches after him on the same path of honourable success. From the year 1839-40 onward the pleasures of life to my father were mainly concentrated in the career and prospects of his children, and although the progress upward was slow, there was always, amid the inevitable shards and thorns of existence, some new flower thereby appearing on his path. Even the ambition for a more genial farm than Bodylair came to be gratified ultimately in a strangely odd way. There happened to come, after many

lean years, one good crop at Bodylair (in 1842, I think it was), and it became the talk of the countryside what a fleece of corn had grown that year on Bodylair. A young farmer who had the half of a riverside farm wanted to get married, and was on the outlook for an independent holding, apart from all neighbours, when on a sudden the proposal was made by him to my father for an exchange of farms. There was a fair balance of advantages on either side: the young man got the scope he wanted in a clear "town loane," and a well-tilled farm in good order as things then went; while my father got a smaller holding, with better land, more genial climate, greater nearness to church and school and post-office, but it was in bad order, greatly run out, with houses needing to be renewed, and, what was worse, he had to share the steading with another family who had the other moiety of the holding, and who, being jealous of any new incomer, were not disposed to be particularly friendly. Altogether the step was a serious one, involving a new outlay of toil and capital under grave disadvantages, and my father, with his high, sharp temper, had a very difficult and even perilous course to steer. Even my mother's courage failed, and it was against her views and those of her father, "Hardies" (Keithmore), that the migration took place, and many and sore were the struggles my father had with discomfort of all sorts, having,

for example, to sleep the first winter in rooms that were damp dens with earthen floors, very inferior to the fairly snug apartments with wooden floors left behind at Bodylair. Moreover, his family was at this time needing most from him, and could help him least, but he bore on stoutly, satisfied that he had now got his heart's desire in a cosy early farm,* and that he had, as he phrased it, "escaped from the heather to the clover." Judged by such sentimental considerations, the movement was probably a right one, but, tested by the laws of political economy, his policy was somewhat doubtful on any ledger balance of the conditions of the case. Eventually, however, everybody, even my mother, became reconciled to the change, when, after some progress in the improvements effected, it was found that the "yield" of things at Invermarkie (for that was the name of the new home) came out better and surer than at Bodylair, and that the houses, when rectified, were found to be in far better and drier soil, and with more pleasant surroundings.

Such was the great change coming midway in his life,

* The tradition as to the fertility of the edge of Deveron may be judged from the saying about the haugh or meadow land of Edinglassie: "Throw down a saugh wand in the evening of a dewy summer night at Edinglassie, and you will need to search for it in the morning; it will be 'happit ower' wi' grass." The same legend Varro (I. 7) relates about a spot in Italy, "in quo relicta pertica postridie non appareret propter herbam."

which made Invermarkie latterly the chief home of the family, and shifted the centre of interest for forty years away from the original "stamm-haus" of Bodylair. His life was thus bisected into two nearly equal portions, and the struggle with nature which he had waged at Bodylair had to be renewed and repeated with diminished energies and lessened capital under difficulties almost more perplexing. Mosses, some of them well nigh bottomless, had to be drained, fields to be trenched, rocks blasted and removed; stretches of broom and whin had to be rooted out, the same broom that he had striven in vain to plant on the outlying portions of Bodylair. Hence he often joked on the oddness of his experience in this respect—a votary once to the bonny yellow broom, and later on its extirpating foe. Besides enlarging the original arable area, he was able to accomplish the same feat as at Bodylair, having effected an annexation amounting to a third of additional territory, extending as far as the mid rivulet known as "Fernidá," and long and arduous was the struggle he had to obtain this expansion from the Factor and the Proprietor. Excepting the death of one of his boys—the youth John who bore his own name—which took place through a fall from a horse in 1846, there was no great misfortune that came nigh his dwelling at Invermarkie, and it may be said that his life at Invermarkie as a whole was unbroken by

any severe experience, except that he had to mourn far away the death of a favourite daughter (Margaret) in Dresden in 1873, and that of an equally favourite son (James) in India in the year 1880, which last formed the greatest sorrow of his own declining years.

Jane Macomachie or Geddes 1882

Chapter V.

RELATION TO CHURCH AND POLITICS.

A REGULAR reader of "Blackwood" during its palmy time under Christopher North, my father was by innate feeling a Conservative, and, although there was much in the relics of the feudal system as affecting land that he disliked and could not approve, his allegiance to Walter Scott on the whole secured his attachment to the side of Conservatism. He became a voter for the county for the first time under the Reform Bill of 1832, not as a farmer, but as owner of a feu in Huntly, and in the elections thereafter he regularly sided with the then Conservative House of Haddo, a member of which (the Hon. Admiral Gordon, brother of the premier Earl of Aberdeen) had then the

representation of the county. It was not an easy matter in those days to exercise a vote on that side: the Huntly populace was strongly against the so-called Tory member and his supporters; and salutations with unsavoury eggs were not unfrequently bestowed on the Conservative voters when on their way to the polling-booth. Even at Bodylair some of the farm servants had contrived to spread the "Whig" doctrines at his own fireside, and one of his bairns, on the eve of an election, having been trained to shout for the Liberal candidate, then Sir Michael Bruce, surprised him by screaming out, 'We're a' gaun to vote for Michael Bruce an' get fusky" —a piece of ventriloquising into his child which by no means inclined him to such a side. Again, in 1841, he supported Admiral Gordon as against Sir Thomas Burnett of Leys, and his support was so marked and consistent that the Admiral expressed personally his thanks to my father for the good service he had rendered. After 1846, and the *volte-face* of Peel turning to unconditional Free Trade without giving the country an opportunity of considering the question, and without getting a new mandate for action, my father recognised that politics had become a slippery game, feeling toward Peel much after the fashion of the southern farmer, who was perplexed by the extraordinary treatment of British agricul-

ture under the man who got into power in 1841 as its patron and protector

> All along o' the feller as turned 'is back on hissen.—(Tennyson's "Owd Roa.")

Hence, like many others, my father lost reckoning and even taste for the business of politics, which he thought had become an ignoble contest of sharpers, seeking only to outwit each other without any large view toward the real benefit of the country and nation, and caring only for victory and its spoils.

As to matters Ecclesiastical, his attitude was kindred to that noted in matters Political. In his early youth, he grew up in a period of quiescence, which characterised the atmosphere of Scotland till the great outburst of Non-intrusionism that led to the Disruption of 1843. Even previous to that event there had been, however, two minor ripples on the sea of ecclesiastical thought with which my father had come into contact—both affecting the valley of the Deveron at two different points in its course—and shaping themselves into waves of Dissent from the Established Church. One of these manifestations of religious life was in the adjoining district of the Lower Cabrach—in a remote and lonely valley, the inhabitants of which were far distant from any parish church, and had organised a centre of worship for themselves at a place

called "Hillock"—and among these dissenters, sometimes Presbyterians, sometimes Congregationalists, had their respective times of ascendency, in full independence from the Established Church. The community still exists with a fresh place of worship in a new but neighbouring locality, and maintains a useful and respectable character in the same district of Lower Cabrach, but in the early time about the beginning of the century, according to all accounts, divisions and discord sometimes ran high within the fold.* Whether any special influence came to my father from these worthy religionists in the Upper Deveron, does not appear: but his points of personal contact with the other group of pious Dissenters, now to be referred to, were both numerous and varied.

Lower down the Deveron, with Huntly for a centre, and much more influential as a congregation, was the remarkable group of Dissenters, belonging especially to the Independent or Congregational persuasion, who exerted a very considerable, even memorable, influence for good on the district around. They were chiefly the fruit of the

* The church referred to was a barn-like building close to a farm called "Altan," and the farmer, "Altans," as he was called, who was a bit of a wag, was credited with ulterior designs upon the edifice, and with complacency over the dissensions. Speaking to a crony about the kirk, he was known to say, "'Od, man, I wuss they wad jist rive ither, till I wad get her for a threshing-mill."

evangelical labours of the Rev. Mr Cowie, who had allied himself with the devoted evangelists, James and Robert Haldane, and they consequently appeared a hundred years ago, about the early days of the present century which is now verging to its close. The name by which they were usually known was the "Missioners," and a most worthy female,* a first cousin of John Geddes, for whom he had a great and sincere respect, who was settled in Huntly, was an adherent, and so my father came in contact with their small but devout society. To the same religious community belonged the families of the Spences and the Legges, both of them, families fruitful in good works and in eloquent preachers, whose names are still fondly remembered, not to mention the two notable brothers, James and George Macdonald, the last being the father of the brilliant and powerful Dr George Macdonald, whose name is known wherever the English language extends. It was among the "Missioners" of Huntly that this gifted son of the Muse was born and grew.

Owing to his withdrawal from Huntly to settle

* This cousin was Margaret Geddes, who became the worthy Mrs Cruickshank, and was mother of the witty and clever James Cruickshank, the merchant on the Square who was so good a friend and counsellor to my father. Her quiet but sincere and unobtrusive piety made a deep impression on us all, and my father called one of his daughters, Margaret, after the good old lady whom we had learned to revere.

permanently in Glass, my father found himself removed from the influence of the "Missioners," and, in his country surroundings, naturally resumed full connection with the Parish Church. By and by burst out the flame of Non-intrusionism, and the Marnoch case, occurring within the Presbytery of the bounds, made Strath-Deveron and Strath-bogie the focus of ecclesiastical discord. The crisis came at length through a series of ecclesiastical suspensions and depositions, which were answered by civil interdicts on the other side, and the *quietus* came by the Disruption of 1843. Into the merits of that controversy we do not presume to enter: suffice it to say that John Geddes, with his Conservative instincts, adhered to the constituted authorities he had been brought up to obey, and stood by his old minister, John Cruickshank, when suspended, as well as by his new minister, Wm. Duguid, who came back from Elgin as assistant and successor to the aged Mr Cruickshank. The result, however, was a disruption in the seven parishes of the suspended ministers, even before 1843, and, in the case of Glass, a separate congregation was set up in a wooden edifice near Polmadie's Pool—a beautiful reach of the river beside Edinglassie. This took away nearly half the population from the old Parish Church, and introduced a separation between many who had formerly been "chief friends."

Being a good penman and a fairly ready composer, my father was sometimes called on to draw up resolutions for public meetings on emergent questions, civil and ecclesiastical, and his skill in drafting such documents led to his being employed as an arbiter and referee oftener than was perhaps either prudent or profitable. Whenever any Petition had to be drawn up for some defaulter as to Rent, or to assoilzie some poor smuggler who had incurred penalties, John Geddes was readily resorted to, so that he became a kind of scrivener for the suits of the parish, but no persuasion could induce him to enter the arena of either School Board or Parochial Board, neither of these being in his way or according to his style.

Such was John Geddes in his parochial environment.

John Geddes, 1876.

From a Painting by Sir George Reid, P.R.S.A.

Chapter VI.

EVENING OF LIFE.

AFTER the period of his struggles, first at Bodylair and then at Invermarkie, there followed eventually, when these had been surmounted, an evening of comparative calm, and it may be said that, apart from the solitude and silence of his blindness, John Geddes enjoyed a serene old age. His domicile during this quiet time, apart from a journey to Edinburgh for an operation, and apart from an occasional turn to Aberdeen, was entirely at Invermarkie. Of this second rural home, the name was one that had old associations that might have stirred his spirit at an earlier age, associations that Bodylair could never claim. An old lairdship, constituting a "Davoch," bore this name of Inver-

markie, and a family of Inneses and another of Gordons, successively located there, had figured in the chronicles in old troublous days, and Spalding's Chronicle especially bore witness to the name of Gordon of Invermarkie as famous in the old time. Among these historic traces, my father was proud to notice that in the Elgin Cathedral a very beautiful monument bears the name of Innes of Invermarkie. There was, however, no trace of any fortalice or ancient residence on the farm, and the halo from these old times was only moonshine in the memory. This defect, however, did not prevent him from addressing himself to the task of adorning and "decoring" the domicile he had obtained, and he set himself to the duty of providing a new slated house, new threshing-mill, and well-stocked garden, in which, with its more genial soil, very different from that of Bodylair, he could now take entire delight. Ere long his Huntly property was requiring attention, and any spare capital having been used up on his farms, he had to borrow money to rebuild the ruinous tenement which he had there annexed by purchase, and this he did under some disadvantages. His experiences with the feu-property were almost as bothering and tantalising as his farming experiences at Bodylair. What with refractory tenants and again with worrying taxes, he spoke as if he had no rest or peace, until by the help of his

family he got a happy emergence out of all his troubles whether with feu or farm.

As early as 1855, he gave expression to the satisfaction he was already deriving from his family. This occurs in a letter of that date in which he refers to the education which the younger branches were then successfully pursuing. "It is certainly," he writes, "the acmé of satisfaction to me to have my family in such a prosperous state, acquiring what may be better for them than an estate, and *what may perhaps procure one.*" It is odd to find that the vaticination in the words which we have italicised became more than confirmed, and the quotation is given as showing the ruling passion which he himself felt of "yird hunger" peeping out so markedly at a time when there was slender hope of its being gratified, and showing at the same time that he never relinquished the expectation of seeing it realised, not indeed by himself, but by some one of his children.

His later life was, therefore, in marked contrast to his early struggles, wonderfully happy, being varied only by witnessing the successive steps of advancement befalling his family—a success as notable in the case of his daughters as of his sons—or diversified chiefly by the visits from time to time with which his children enlivened the old joint hearth and home. Conspicuous among these visits

were those from time to time of his youngest son, Alexander, who had been remarkably successful as a business man, first in Canada and then in Chicago, and who generously stepped in to relieve my father of all care and trouble in the management of his farm and the conduct of his affairs. Moreover, with the rise of *his* good fortune, a still greater feat was achieved, and one that proved the crowning enjoyment of my father's life, namely, the purchase by his son from Lord Fife of a large portion of his native parish. To see his son sit as *laird* or owner of broad lands, where he himself had yearned, for long in vain, to become *tenant* of a few genial acres, was to my father an exceeding joy, and he would say with brimming heart, his cup was running over, all through the great prosperity that had attended and the notable generosity that distinguished his youngest son. He did not live to see the further epilogue in the acquisition of a much larger portion of the parish, an event which makes his son the largest heritor within it, and constitutes him owner of the charming demesne of Aswanly, the very name of which, with its old trees and turrets and historic associations, would have been like music to the old man's ear. The whole story is all the more remarkable that for a long time my father resisted most obstinately the notion of this same boy's emigrating, for the reason that it broke off

what he thought was his son's proper education—viz., at the University, and it was with the utmost difficulty that a permission, never amounting to a consent, was extracted from him, allowing the boy to follow the strong bent which led him to try his fortune in America, and eventuated in his notable and successful career.

In the evening of his days, therefore, John Geddes enjoyed, and knew that he was fortunate in enjoying, in fair measure what the poet says should accompany old age—"obedience" and "troops of friends"; for, besides his own family, the friends of his youth who survived were not slow to show their respect for one who was always sociable and full of kindly cheer. The only sensation approaching to excitement in his later years was an occasional visit to Aberdeen on a "prowl" after rare old books, or a raid to try to complete his "first editions" of the Waverleys and the like, or to give sittings, as he had the privilege of doing, to George Reid, the future President of the R.S.A. Twice he extended his pilgrimage to Edinburgh, once, before his eyesight failed, in company with his dear friend and cousin, Mr James Cruickshank, who took charge of him in his journey, this time by rail, and not, as in his first visit, by sea. On this occasion, they indulged in a side-excursion to Glasgow, to get a glimpse of its Cathedral and the scene associated with Rob Roy.

The other and final visit to Edinburgh was in 1870. It took place under sadder auspices, inasmuch as he was then in the oculist's hand for cataract. Unfortunately, the operation on the eye that was selected, through no fault of the oculist, was not successful, and as it was thought hardly wise in the weak state of his health to attempt an operation on the other eye, he had to return home a prisoner by the fireside for the most part* during the ten remaining years allotted to him. Yet he never entirely lost the feeling of "light," and could tell night from day. To the last, when taken to his favourite eminence overlooking the Deveron, and known as the "Drum," he was sensible of the "shimmer" or gleam of the sun in a bright day playing upon the waters, and there he could enjoy at the same time the kindred pleasure of hearing the ripple of the water making music on the ledge of rocks over which the stream there takes a plunge.

In the great shadow that thus enshrouded him, it was now that his old stores of reading and folk-lore came to the

* The chief exception was the journey, above referred to, to Aberdeen, when George Reid, afterwards Sir George, got him to give two sittings for the *Triplica* representing him in three different moods. Taken after the operation for cataract, the picture gives the feeling of blindness, but otherwise yields a varied expression, one of the likenesses being jovial in its tone, another sombre, while the third gives his normal equilibrium of thoughtful, contented humour. The whole is contained in one canvas, and is the latest memento of the old man.

rescue, enabling him in his humble sphere to cull the treasures of pleasant remembrance and airy fancy from the stored-up past, and although he would occasionally speak gloomily and talk as if the earth was now for him a "cavern," his genial cheerfulness and even buoyancy were remarkable.* The stern discipline of life had brought home to him many lessons as to man's mortality, and he once told me that, when he was a young man, the daily spectacle of the shattered towers of Strathbogie Castle, with all its gorgeous but ruined emblazoning, overlooking Huntly town, read to him in his boyish years a pensive lesson of the futility and vanity of all earthly grandeur. Hence he early learned, notwithstanding all his ambitions, the great lesson of life, that it is only a finite measure of happiness that is enjoyable by the happiest in this sublunary world. He also recognised the good hand of Providence as having so ordered his lot that he had seen considerably beyond the allotted span of the three score years and ten, and this span, too, largely exempt from labour and sorrow—a period of life not reached by his own

* At times he would indulge, not always sincerely we thought, in the Byronic vein, using phrases where less was meant than really met the ear. Thus he would talk of his wish to make his bed among the clods of the valley at Wallakirk, and would speak of his last transit there as an excursion in his "timber trews," meaning his wooden coffin, a quip of wit which he turned on oftener than his family generally liked to hear.

father nor by almost any of his compeers who had started with him in Life's gay morn.* But the end was now approaching, and the great proud heart was at length to be calm and still. In the severe spring of 1881, he had caught a cold which proved deep-seated, much more so than many ailments that he had been wont easily to surmount, and a persistent bronchitis was developed, from which he never recovered. In the month of July, when at Inverness, where I was engaged in an examination of the Academy, I received a telegram that Father was seriously ill, and I hastened to Invermarkie, but arrived only in time to see him still alive, although unconscious and passing away—a last sad scene I can still recall—with his youngest daughter Charlotte bending over him with all tender care. This was on Friday the 8th July 1881, and his eldest and youngest thus met together at his dying bedside in the upper room in the old paternal home.

His remains were interred with every token of respect from his friends and fellow-parishioners in the resting-place of his fathers, within the Churchyard of Wallakirk,

* In a letter earnestly dissuading the afore-mentioned emigration of his youngest boy, he touched on this sad theme pathetically.

"I recollect," he wrote, "when Mr Cruickshank [the parish minister] used to vaunt that he had a son in every quarter of the globe, and now where are they? Had they kept together, like the bundle of sticks in the fable, a different account might be had of them."

belonging to his native parish—one of the most pleasing spots in respect of situation and surroundings and old associations that northern Scotland can show. Above, we discern the frowning crags of the Succoch, and over both kirkyard and glen there seems to brood a spirit of pastoral or rather Ossianic melancholy, for the spot lies secluded among the alders and hazels fringing a fine reach of the Deveron, which murmurs or gurgles sweetly along as if joyous at having escaped from the dark gorge beneath the Castle of Beldorney. The place is thus one of quiet peace in a lonely glen, with memories stretching back into the early Celtic times, and it was, therefore, with touching significance that the blind old man used upon occasion to rehearse the words of the sightless Celtic bard as appropriate to himself and descriptive of the spot where he desired to find his final resting place:

"O lay me, ye that see the light, near some rock of my hills;
Let the thick hazels be around; let the rustling oak be near.
Green be the place of my rest; let the sound of the distant torrent be heard."
(Inis-thona.)

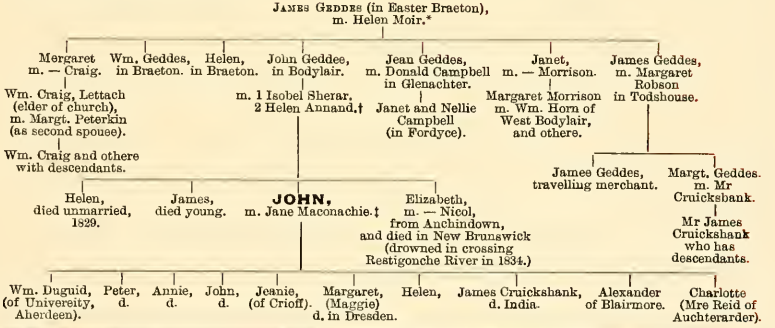
W. D. G.

Appendix.

I.—STEM OF GEDDES FAMILY.

(Ancestors were, according to tradition, in Torry, in Burnyard of Lettach, and in Little Hillockhead, all in parish of Glass).

N.B.—The order of enumeration within the different sub-divisions of the family is not ascertained to be in every instance according to seniority.


James Geddes (in Easter Braeton), m. Helen Moir.*
Mergaret m. — Craig.
Wm. Geddes, in Braeton.
Helen, in Braeton.
John Geddee, in Bodylair.
Jean Geddes, m. Donald Campbell in Glenachter.
Janet, m. — Morrison.
James Geddes, m. Margaret Robson in Todshouse.
Wm. Craig, Lettach (elder of church), m. Margt. Peterkin (as second spouse).
m. 1 Isobel Sherar, 2 Helen Annand.†
Janet and Nellie Campbell (in Fordyce).
Margaret Morrison m. Wm. Horn of West Bodylair, and others.
Wm. Craig and others with descendants.
James Geddes, travelling merchant.
Margt. Geddes. m. Mr Cruicksbank.
Helen, died unmarried, 1829.
James, died young.
JOHN, m. Jane Maconachie.‡
Elizabeth, m. — Nicol, from Anchindown, and died in New Brunswick (drowned in crossing Restigonche River in 1834.)
Mr James Cruickshank who has descendants.
Wm. Duguid, (of Univereity, Aberdeen).
Peter, d.
Annie, d.
John, d.
Jeanie, (of Crioff).
Margaret, (Maggie) d. in Dresden.
Helen,
James Cruickshank, d. India.
Alexander of Blairmore.
Charlotte (Mre Reid of Auchterarder).

* Helen Moir was closely related to Dr Alex. Moir, of St Croix, West Indies, the founder of the Moir Burearies at King's College, Aberdeen, and it wae one of these Bursaries which the eldest son, Wm. Duguid, gained and enjoyed when a student.

† Helen Annend's mother was a Brewster, sister to an Arthur Breweter, locksmith to the Dnke of Gordon. He had a son who lived in Cahrach, also a famoue emith, styled, from his eccentricity, "wud Brewster," known to my father, and recognised hy him ae a relation. These Brewsters could count kin, eo it was helieved, with Sir David Breweter and his family.

‡ September 27, 1797, date of baptism of John Geddes, and August 1st, 1803, date of baptism of Jane Maconachie. Extracted respectively from Glass and Mortlach Registere.

II.—Excerpt from Will of James Geddes in 1775, Grandfather of John Geddes, subject of this memoir, who was first in Bodylair, and afterwards in Invermarkie.

N.B.—The Will was drawn by the Rev. John Touch, Minister at Mortlach. He was also at Pluscarden.—(See Macphail's *Pluscarden*, p. 147.) It is a circumstance which cannot now be explained, why there is no mention of the "portion" to the daughter Margaret, mother of my father's first cousin, William Craig of Lettach, in whose repositories the Will was discovered.

I, James Geddes, in Braetown of Glenmarkie, being in a declining state of health, but, blessed be God, sound in memory and judgment, and considering the certainty of death and the uncertainty of the time and manner thereof, do make my last Will and Testament in manner and to the effect following:

Imprimis,—I recommend my soul to God, hoping for salvation only through Jesus Christ, and to prevent all Pleas and Controversies among my Children after my death about my worldly goods and gear, I do hereby constitute, nominate, and appoint my eldest Son, William Geddes, to be my only lawful Executor, Legatee, and universal Intromitter with all my goods and gear, corns, meal, malt, horses, nolt, sheep, ... and to intromit with all money that may be in my custody at death or due me by Bond, Bill, Ticket, running Account . . . . . to my Son, James (over and above the money which I expended in breeding him to a Trade), Fourty Merks Scots money, and to my Third Son, John Geddes, Two Hundred Merks Scots money, and the like sum of Two Hundred Merks to my daughter, Janet Geddes, and the like sum of Two Hundred Merks to my youngest daughter, Helen Geddes, said daughters being both unmarried. And though I have already given an equivalent and more to my daughter, Jean Geddes, spouse of Donald Campbell, yet I leave and bequeath to her and said husband Ten Merks money foresaid. . . . . .

In Witness whereof these presents written on this and the preceding page by Mr John Touch, Minister at Mortlach, and subscribed by me at Upper Glen this twenty-seventh day of October One Thousand Seven Hundred and Seventy-Five years before these Witnesses, John Maver at Balvenie and said Mr Touch.

John Maver, *Witness*. Signed James Geddes.
John Touch, *Witness*.

III.—OBITUARY NOTICES OF PETER GEDDES, SECOND SON OF JOHN GEDDES.

DEATH OF MR PETER GEDDES, GLASS. 1893.

Many will regret to read of the death of Mr Peter Geddes which took place at his residence, Invermarkie, last Saturday after a brief illness. The week before Mr Geddes had been as far as Aberdeen, and was up and going about two days before his death. Throughout the district "Peter" was a great favourite, and much sorrow is felt at his death. Mr Geddes was the second son of the late Mr John Geddes, Invermarkie, and was one of a remarkable family, of which Sir William Geddes, Principal of Aberdeen University, and Mr Alexander Geddes of Blairmore, are conspicuous examples. Like the other members of the family, "Peter" was a great reader, especially of history, and particularly of Scotch history, and, with a reliable and powerful memory, he used to delight his local friends with well-selected stories from his readings. For a number of years back, Mr Geddes had taken to making various antiquarian collections, some of which, his violins and old silver in particular, being very valuable. He had also a great love of ancient furniture of every description, and had quite a unique collection in his home. There he had likewise a splendid lot of "peer men" of all shapes and sizes, in connection with some of which the deceased had many an interesting story to tell. Deceased was sixty-three years of age, and was unmarried. The funeral took place on Wednesday, the remains being interred in Wallakirk Churchyard, the family burying-place. Service was conducted in the house at Invermarkie by the Rev. D. Ross, E.C., and in the barn by Rev. D. Macaulay, F.C. In spite of very stormy weather, there was a large turn-out of friends from Glass and surrounding districts to pay a last tribute of respect to one who was loved by all who knew him. Among those present were:—Sir William Geddes, Aberdeen, Mr Geddes of Blairmore—brothers of deceased; Master J. Geddes of Blairmore—nephew; Rev. D. M. Ross, The Manse; Rev. D. Macaulay, F.C. Manse; Dr J. O. Wilson, Huntly; Rev. W. Annand, Huntly; Messrs John Porter, Huntly; Wm. Simpson, Huntly; Alex. Grant, Gordon Arms Hotel; Wilson, Huntly; Robertson, Huntly; Maconnachie, Huntly; Laing, Keith; Smith, Cantraydown, Nairnshire; Cran, Bunchrew; Stables, Lynemore; Edward, Cairnborrow; Bennet, Parkhall; Dempster, Bogforth; Wilson, Bogforth; Bonnyman, Aswanly; T. Gauld, Blairmore; A. Gauld,

Invermarkie ; Lipp, Haugh ; Grant, Haugh ; Robertson, Greystone ; Wood, Schoolhouse ; Duncan, Edinglassie ; Duncan, Glenmarkie ; Duff, Parkhaugh, &c., &c.—"Huntly Express" of January 14th, 1893.

DEATH OF MR PETER GEDDES, GLASS.

The funeral of the late Mr Peter Geddes, who died on Saturday, 7th inst. [January 7th, 1893] took place on Wednesday from Invermarkie. Service was conducted in the house at Invermarkie, by Rev. D. M. Ross, The Manse, and in the barn, by Rev. D. Macaulay, F.C.

The remains were accompanied to Wallakirk, the family burying ground, by the brothers, Sir Wm. Geddes and Alexander Geddes, Esq. of Blairmore, and by his nephew, Master J. Geddes of Blairmore, and a very large number of friends from far and near. Although Mr Geddes had been ailing for some time, he was able to be up and about until two days before his death, which came as a surprise to everyone. There is general expression of deep sorrow at the death of "Peter," as he was familiarly called, and much sympathy is felt for his relatives in their bereavement.

Mr Geddes was the second son of the late Mr John Geddes, Invermarkie, and one of a very distinguished family, and, like the other members of the family, was endowed with a remarkably retentive memory. With such a memory and a fondness for history, his number of facts stored away and ready at call, whether of Roman history or Scotch history, was extraordinary. His local friends, however, appreciated most his minute knowledge of Glass, past and present, about which he was being continually referred to as the authority.

Mr Geddes' great liking for everything old led him, by way of amusement, to make various antiquarian collections, some of which are of great value. His collection of violins especially is worth seeing, and, as he played a little himself, and was a great admirer of Marshall, his large collection of "Strathspeys" would be of great interest to the violinist. Peter was always happiest when talking of Glass in the old times, or of his violins and the great Marshall. He died as he lived, respected and loved by all around him, and as he will long be remembered in Glass, we may truly use regarding his death the lines :—

"But open converse is their none,
So much the vital spirits sink
To see the vacant chair and think,
'How good ! how kind !' and he is gone."

IV.—EXCERPTS FROM OCCASIONAL LETTERS OF JOHN GEDDES.

N.B.—These are a few specimens of the more interesting letters that happen to be preserved, and are here chosen as relating to incidents of some family interest. The first (No. 1) concerns the announcement that his son had become Professor of Greek in the University, Old Aberdeen, and, being only half dated, indicates the excited paternal feelings on the occasion. The telegraph to Huntly referred to was quite new and unfamiliar, and the tantalising situation, lasting for the moment, is thence understood, as the father always expected the tidings to come by the slower conveyance of a postal letter. The second is given as a specimen of his impulsive spirit in respect of travel and his early morning expeditions; and the rest, which concern family incidents, are given so as to show his kindly heart as well as his lively style of expression.

No. 1.

Tuesday.*

My Dear W.,

I sincerely congratulate you on the momentous event of yesterday. I am so overpowered with excitement that I shall say little. You have often already made my heart glad, but last night I came from Huntly with feelings I cannot express. May you long enjoy your well-earned triumph, and yourself receive, on as many occasions as I have done from you, the same sensations from yours: I can wish you no greater felicity.

I went to Huntly a little before 5, but it was known there long before that

* The full date was Tuesday, 23rd October 1855, being the day after October 22nd of that year, when the election of his son to the Greek Chair took place.

time. I never saw Mrs Cruickshank, senior,* in the same joyous mood, which applies to them all, but they did not tell me plump out. Mrs C., senior, gave me a glass of wine "to enable me to hear good news," but kept her countenance, so that I did not discover that she had them. Little Isabella [Cruickshank] came in, and Mrs C. fell a *winking* to her, which made me suspect at once, as I had never seen her winking about anything before. She said James [her son] would tell me somewhat about it, and to him I went. He was in the shop busy with customers, and beyond asking how I did, seemed unconscious of anything in the wind; nay, he put on a long, lugubrious sort of face, which he never does at other times. This might have betrayed him, if excitement would have let me open mine eyes; but no, I had to ask whether he had any communication from you to-day. He counter-checked that with "Have you seen my mother?" I said I had. He then shook hands violently, with "All is right," and described the manner of it [the telegram], and then I had another glass of wine with him, which was quaffed to your long life and prosperity with more compliments than I shall transcribe, and then all were at liberty to congratulate me; and such a scene! . . . . . Patty just tells me it is in the *Banffshire Journal* of this day. All know here [in Glass] from the least to the greatest.

Ever yours,

(Signed) JOHN GEDDES.

A final crossing runs, "What think you of my dream now?"†

No. 2.

My Dear William,

. . . . . Jamie and I had a trip on Saturday last. We went to Burnside of Enzie to see a great sale. Your mother "hounded" me out to buy many things, but I would not have gone at all but for the books, and, being Saturday, we were to see Gordon Castle, and come home on Sunday. . . . . [After seeing the books, which did not tempt him]

* Margaret Geddes, his cousin.

† This alludes to some "dream" which had given him, as he thought, some encouragement as to the issue. Some families he thought it lucky to dream about, and an incident of this kind so befalling is thus alluded to.

I said No, and we left *instanter* and went to Fochabers, where we were invited to tea by Mr Cran, banker, and then called on Mrs Wagstaff,* who was very kind, and wished us to stay overnight and see the grounds [of Gordon Castle]. In order to get away, we said we were going to Elgin that night that Jamie might see it, and then another road home. We were in time to let Jamie see the Cathedral, and got up at 4 and showed him the whole Town, and left at 8 a.m. and came home about 1 p.m. Write soon.

Ever yours,

(Signed) JOHN GEDDES.

No. 3.

(To his Daughter-in-law on the birth of a child.)

Invermarkie, Oct. 3rd, 1860.

My Dear Madam,

We are this morning in receipt of the most welcome and pleasing intelligence that has ever reached us. All here are in heroics, and each telling me what to say, as if it was an Irish Parliament, so that I am afraid some of it will be nonsense.

I can assure you, my very dear Madam, that it gives me unmingled and heartfelt rejoicing to hear that you have just become a mother, and that mother and the young stranger are both doing well. May you experience all a mother's joys, and escape as many of a mother's sorrows as under a kind Providence is here possible.

Yours very sincerely,

(Signed) JOHN GEDDES.

No. 4.

Extract from Letter to CHARLOTTE *when in Dresden.*

8th Jany. 1865.

. . . . . I was in Aberdeen in November last. Miss B.† is really a most interesting young lady. She will be very accomplished, and is very

* Eldest daughter of Rev. Mr Cruickshank of Glass.
† The grand-daughter.

beautiful. She was extremely kind to me, and showed me everything: gave me "Jack the Giant-killer" home with me. . . . She is very sprightly and lively: she does not walk, but darts as quick as a trout in a sunny pool, but of all her graces none takes such a hold of my feelings as her *fine voice*. I never heard anything like it, so rich and sweet: she enunciates every word and syllable to perfection. May she have a very happy life before her. . . .

*** *Epistolary Specimen of the Year 1834 from his Brother-in-law,* Al. Maconachie (referred to on page 66).

Braehead, Banchory, 16th April 1834.

My Dear Sir,

I was duly favoured with your letter complaining of my negligence, carelessness, &c., &c., and although you have had the first word of flyting on the subject, yet I consider myself justified in turning the tables and making a similar expostulation with you, for you were certainly my debtor up to the date of the 4th ulto., the day on which I received your epistle, which, on account of its briefness and the length of time that has elapsed since the period of its being due, cannot be esteemed as full payment, but must be ranked only as a small dividend.

Indeed, you had so long delayed to renew the gratification which I always experience by hearing from you, that I was purposing from time to time to write you, in order to inquire whether you had really become a bankrupt in epistolary correspondence, and whether it would be in vain for a creditor friend to expect a few lines from you by way of instalment, but my suspicions on this score were happily removed by the receipt of your epistle, which inclines me to infer gladly, from its quakeristic style, that you would not so far symbolize with men so famed for their scrupulous and stern morality, without considering yourself to be under the indispensable obligation of fulfilling any literary demand which can be legally preferred against you. Having now finished these prefatory remarks, I would beg leave to congratulate you upon the success which has at length crowned your desire of enlarging the boundary of

your farm,* and to wish you all the pleasure and profit which this acquisition has inclined you to anticipate.

In regard to your kind request of paying you a visit at your dwelling, I have only to say that as soon as you and your Jane shall afford us the pleasure of seeing you at Braehead, my Jane and I shall lose no time in completing the necessary arrangements for returning the compliment, and that I shall look upon your slow or ready acceptance of this proposal as the real criterion by which I am to judge of your willingness to gratify a desire which would afford us so much unmingled satisfaction. I am sure that the season of spring has been so favourable for the operations of agriculture, that you can have no room to urge any reasonable objection against the speedy fulfilment of this request, and therefore I hope that, upon the receipt of this letter, you will hold a conference about the matter, and acquaint me concerning the time at which it will be most convenient for you to undertake the jaunt, and hoping that you will not delay to remit me a favourable answer, I am, with compliments to yourself and Jane, in which I am joined by Mr Laing† and Mrs M'C.,

My Dear Sir,

Yours most sincerely,

ALEXANDER M'CONNACHIE.

To Mr John Geddes, Glass.

* The section that came to him about this time from Wester Bodylair, noted above on p. 62.

† Father of Mrs M'C.

fac-similes.

James Geddes
1775

John Geddes
1860

William Geddes*

1840

Yours most sincerely
Alexander M'Gonnachie

1834

* Inscription by John Geddes on his son's Pocket Bible, 1840.

FINIS